

ANIMAG

THE MAGAZINE OF JAPANESE ANIMATION

1

VOLUME 2

ANIMECON EXTRAVAGANZA



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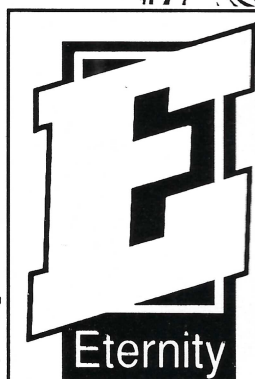
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ANIMECON SPECIAL

ANIMAG takes you inside AnimeCon '91, the first large-scale Japanese animation-oriented convention in the U.S., featuring interviews with some of your favorite manga artists and character designers, anecdotes and recollections of the con as it happened, a random poll of your average fan on the street, and more...



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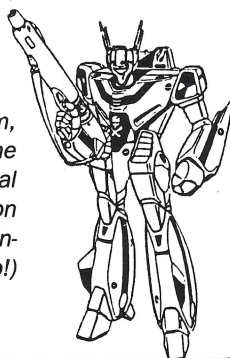
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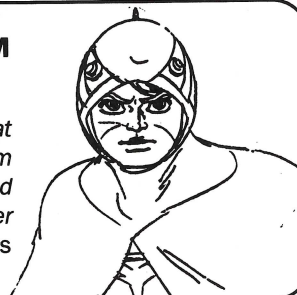
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EDITORIAL COMMENTS

Everyone even remotely connected with anime has heard the grumbling that the genre is dead or dying. But I really don't believe that's so.

True, the output from Japan in terms of television programming has decreased over the last five years. But what about the large numbers of high-quality OAV series now available? What about the collections of old, highly prized shows now available on laserdisk? New animation is still being produced; you just have to look for it in different places.

Most importantly, you can now find Japanese animation in America with less effort than ever before. Fans craving anime goods can correspond with over ten mail-order anime goods outlets. Anyone who wants to know more about Japanese animation can pick up one of the five internationally-distributed anime magazines, including ANIMAG, currently out on the market.

And in terms of the anime itself, over four dedicated subtling and dubbing companies are working to bring anime to the states. Already such works as *Akira* and *Hokuto No Ken* have been dubbed in English and released in theaters.

Manga has experienced an upsurge in popularity as well. *Lone Wolf and Cub*, *Akira*, *Nausicaa*,

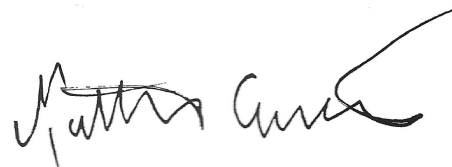
Mai the Psychic Girl, *Crying Freeman*, *3X3 Eyes* and more have been translated and are readily available in comic shops.

Capping off the list of anime's successes, the first all-anime convention in the United States, AnimeCon, was a roaring success (see this issue for details).

I think all this proves that the genre is not "dying," as some disillusioned fans claim, but evolving. Seeing quality reproductions of anime in so many legitimate outlets is a heck of a lot better than seeing, as I and so many others once did, a fifth-generation copy of a show on a 13" black-and-white screen.

Once, a long time ago, I believed anime was dead because I simply didn't know where to find it anymore. But once I got into the swing of things, I found I could get anime almost anywhere—once I knew where to look. As the anime market and production changes in both America and Japan, American fans need to learn to cut the keening for the "good old days," because the good old days are still here. We just have to learn to go with the times, that's all.

Managing Editor



LETTERS to ANIMAG

Dear ANIMAG

I have been a Japanimation freak for several years now and I am patiently awaiting issue number twelve. ANIMAG has been very informative to me; without it, I would have found it very difficult to understand most of the videos I now have.

I would like to hear your opinions on the so-called "Children's Television" watchdog organizations we have in the United States. It's obvious how they are "protecting" young children from violence on television. In my point of view, these people have always annoyed me with their actions, which have ruined many good shows, including some of our own domestic programs. No matter what good they mean, it seems that they have made the situation worse.

Another opinion I have concerns the lack of original programming they have on syndication. American stations have apparently put down this 65-episode requirement for programs to be aired, and yet I see shows running on less than twenty (any mention of a certain quartet of mutant turtles or American heroes here?). And finally, I would like to thank you for the quality of your publication and your perseverance in getting it done. You must know you've got a die-hard fan out here on the East Coast desperately waiting for your words.

Carmen Jon Bernardo
Newark, Delaware

American television policies and practices are, of course, something we really can't answer for, especially in the case of domestic shows. The networks can pretty much do what they want in response to consumer or advertiser pressure. The solution? Write the network. It's the tactic used by the groups you mention. As for the distortions

visited upon Japanese shows imported into the U.S., look for an upcoming article on the scenes you never saw in the English translation.

Dear ANIMAG,

ANIMAG has covered everything from *Gundam* (1st generation) to *Gundam 0080* so far, except for *Gundam ZZ*. Now that *Z Gundam* is finished, do you think *Gundam ZZ* will follow?

Henry Hsu
Howick, Auckland
New Zealand

As you've already noted, we've covered most of the Gundam universe in-depth aside from the newest film, Gundam F91 and the 0083 OAV series, both of which we have plans to cover in upcoming issues. As ANIMAG is sometimes referred to as the "official magazine of Gundam," you can be assured that if it is Gundam, eventually we will cover it. Gundam ZZ will most likely be reviewed in an overview of the Gundam universe currently in the works.

Dear ANIMAG,

Thumbs up ANIMAG! Your magazine has done an astounding job of covering the subject of Japanese animation. Some might argue that you don't cover as wide a spectrum of available anime, but this is understandable considering the size of your magazine is limited to around 50 pages.... Anyway, I just finished reading your response to Raymond Sison's letter in issue 11 and I started thinking about a couple of things.

Why does it seem (at least in my opinion) that the Japanese animation studios (or the companies that distribute their films) are very leery of distributing, or even advertising (not even in ANIMAG) their films in the U.S.? Japanese companies hold sway over a sizable

portion of the American entertainment industry anyway, why not expand their animation overseas? Perhaps they are doing just that on an experimental basis by licensing anime and manga for subtitling and translating to U.S. companies. Are the Japanese companies so fickle that they won't take bigger chances? What about cable TV?

I'd like to see something approximating a serial manga, like *Five Star Stories* in *Newtype*. Publication on a monthly basis and neat little goodies like cassette indexes and postcards would be a nice touch, too.

Jack Colville Jr.
Valparaiso, Indiana

Well... as for the Japanese companies bringing animation to the U.S., it's being done but on a small scale, as you've noticed. Part of the reason is that so far the American response to anime has not been that great, at least not in the terms the Japanese companies are used to. Until the American market shows the kind of interest in anime that the European market does, the U.S. will probably continue to be considered "small potatoes." But there is hope— new translations are at their highest

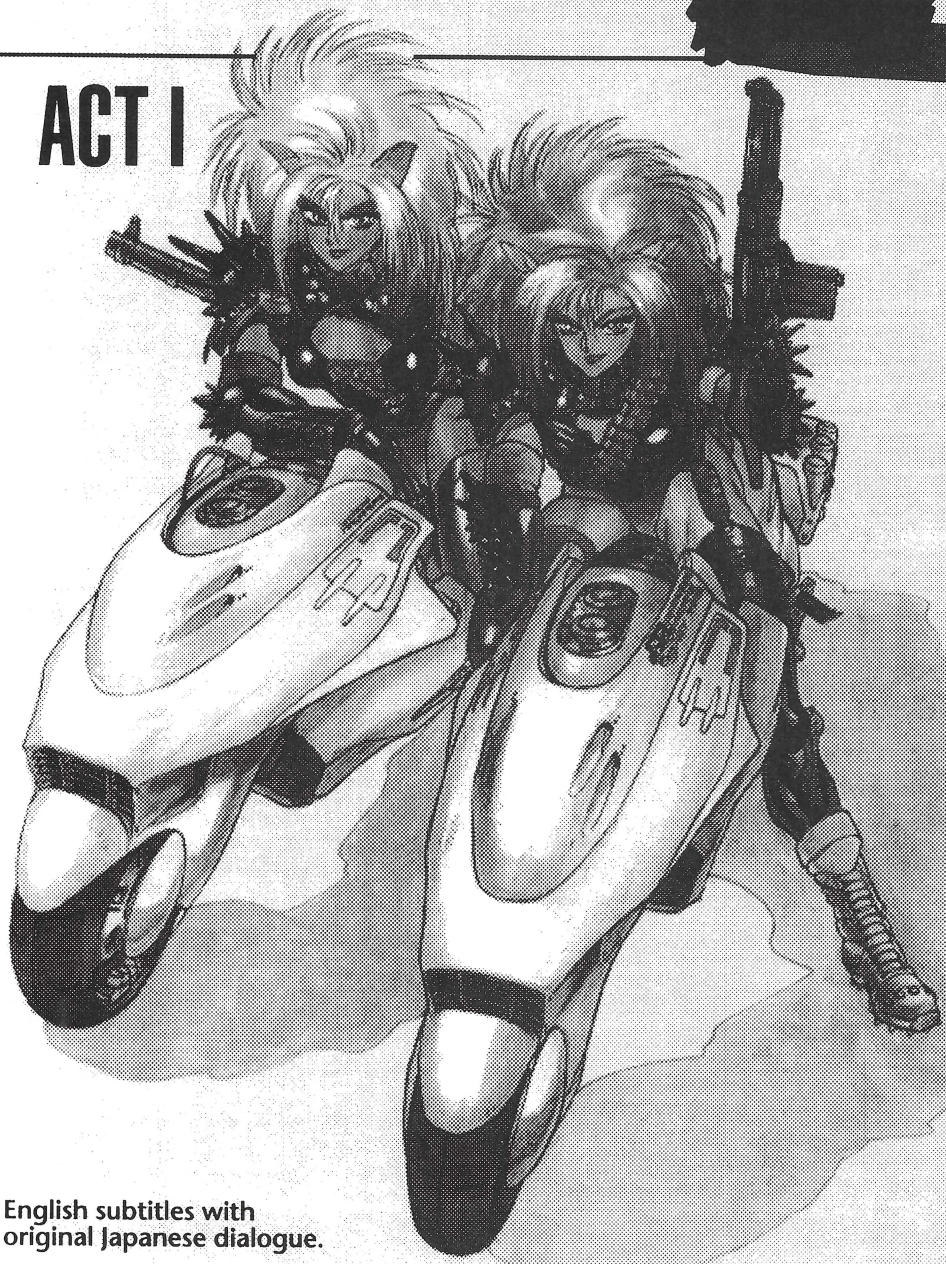
point in some time and interest is growing. Keep faith! In response to your request for a serial comic and other "neat goodies," well... the additional pages (and additional cost) of such ventures would have to be reflected in the cover price, and we'd like to keep the cost of ANIMAG in the affordable range for our fans.

ANIMAG welcomes letters from its readers. Address correspondence to ANIMAG, P.O. Box 31492, San Francisco, CA 94131. Letters may be edited for length or clarity.

DOMINION TANK POLICE



ACT I



English subtitles with
original Japanese dialogue.

DOMINION

TANK POLICE: ACT I

In the year 2010, the earth has been encircled by a toxic cloud so noxious as to require the population to wear gas-masks. Human morals have fared no better—a violent crime is committed every 36 seconds! Leading the attack on society are the cat sisters **Annapuna** and **Unipuma**. Sexy but ruthless, these bio-engineered commandos ally with grotesque half-human, half-cyborg gang leader Buaku in ceaseless, naked aggression.

Enter the **Tank Police**. Led by "Mr. Squad Commander" Britain, this space-age law and order patrol welcomes its newest member, Leona, during a round of "grenade golf" which puts the "terror" back into their "interrogation" of a suspect. However, these extreme tactics are necessary against the notorious Buaku Gang. This gang stoops so low as to terrorize a hospital in order to steal the urine samples of people unaffected by the toxic atmosphere. They only escape the fearsome Tank Police by virtue of a deadly strip-tease performed by the feline crime sisters.

Don't miss this action-packed tale of a girl and her tank, fighting the forces of futuristic terrorism. (While you're at it, don't miss the terrorists themselves—you never knew evil could be so sexy!)

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ANIMATION UPDATE

Porco Rosso: the Crimson Pig



Two years after directing *Kiki's Delivery Service* and a year after producing *Omoide Poro Poro*, animator Hayao Miyazaki is back with another heart-warming creation. Based on an illustrated essay that appeared in the monthly *Model Graphix* magazine, *Porco Rosso* allows Miyazaki to play with one of his favorite concepts: flying vehicles.

Fans of Miyazaki's work will note a flying sequence in almost every one of Miyazaki's films, from *Castle of Cagliostro* to *Tonari no Totoro*. Miyazaki admits that he has an affinity for flying vehicles as op-

posed to modern jets, which are nothing more than rockets with wings. Miyazaki's vehicle of choice is an autogyro, an ornithopter, or an aeroplane. Miyazaki's love of aviation is shown in the designs of *Porco Rosso*: Porco Rosso flies a bootleg Curtis aeroplane displaying the emblem of the city of Genoa.

The story is designed to provide multiple opportunities for

borne heroics. At the end of the 1920s, when a global depression is sapping the spirit of many, the Crimson Pig braves the skies alone with a knightly spirit of chivalry in his bootleg Curtis. He lives in a world of adventure and action, where the blood boils with heroics and a macho, chivalrous spirit rules the day.

After working on the imaginative fantasies of his recent movies, Miyazaki claims he is ready to return to the world of male egos, where the animator wouldn't have a second thought about depicting the main character sitting on the toilet. His goal is to make a humorous, action-packed animated movie that will remove the stigma from

MACROSS II

For years fans speculated whether the hugely popular *Macross* series and movie would spawn a sequel, and for years the animation industry replied with an oblique "Maybe." Now, Bandai plans to release what may be the most widely anticipated sequel since *Yamato: Macross II*.

Macross II features character designs by Haruhiko Mikomoto, who designed the characters for the original *Macross* and *Macross: Do You Remember Love?* Directed by Kennichi Yatani, with animation direction by Hideyuki Hashimoto and Takehiro Nakayama, the six-volume OAV (Original Animation Video) series is due out from Bandai in Spring 1992.

In the original *Macross*, Protoculture was the ancient proto-civilization from which Earth, humanity and the Zentradi were commonly descended. Despite the Zentradi's numerical and technical superiority, Earth defeated them when Lynn Minmei's songs touched the Zentradi's genetic code of love and sharing, a code passed to them from their mutual Protoculture ancestors.

In *Macross II*, another descendent of Protoculture has come to conquer earth—but one that has discovered the power of song

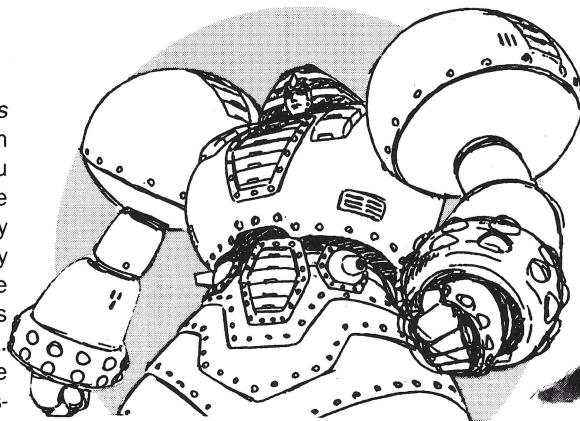
and has realized its potential as a mind control device. Unlike the Zentradi, who never refined their technology, the Maalduq have science, technology, and culture at their fingertips. Inspired by their singing priestess, the Maalduq soldiers fight with zeal equal to that of a human soldier defending Earth.

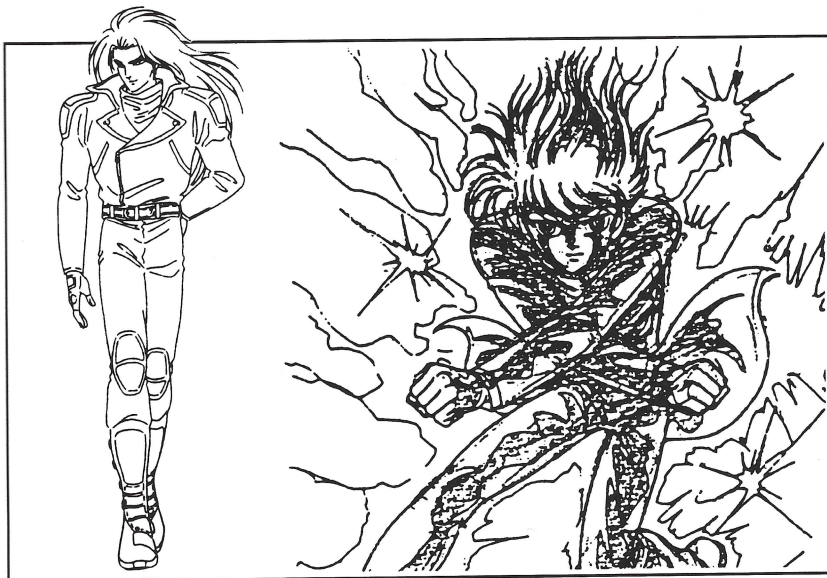
Meanwhile, on Earth, three centuries have passed since the legendary times of *Macross*, the city inside the giant space fortress. The Zentradi on Earth have completely assimilated into humanity and leave little impression that they ever invaded. Cities are based on abandoned Zentradi ships interconnected with a global transportation network. Progress has strangely stagnated; the most recent mecha is the VF-XS Valkyrie-II, directly descended from the VF-1 Valkyrie of 300 years before. Instead of being a combat vehicle, the VF-XS Valkyrie-II serves as the Earth Force's work-horse machine.

It is during this time of peace that the Maalduq, led by their singing idol, Ishtar, come rampaging through the galaxy. Hibiki Kanzaki, a nosy reporter with his own official press Valkyrie, tries to get the inside scoop in the alien Maalduq—and ends up bringing home the alien princess Ishtar.

Giant Robo

Aired in the U.S. as *Johnny Sokko and his Giant Robot*, *Giant Robo* was a live-action series created 24 years ago by Mitsuteru Yokoyama (*Babel II*, *Tetsujin 28*). A 50-minute OAV of the original story will be released by Amuse Video in spring of 1992. The story deals with a nefarious group known as the International Crime Syndicate BF, which plans to dominate the world with a giant robot. Professor Kusama and his son Daisaku are kidnapped to create the robot, but are rescued by an international investigative organization. When Daisaku decides to join his rescuers' team the excitement really begins...





Babel II

The popular classic television series *Babel II*, originally created by Mitsuteru Yokoyama in 1973, is being released as a four-part OAV series in March '92 by J. C. Staff. Directed by Yoshihisa Matsumoto, the OAVs feature character designs by Shingo Araki and story by Toshi Namiki.

The story features a teenager, Koichi, who repeatedly has the same odd dream of a tower in the desert, a giant bird flying overhead, and a voice calling him Babel II. A chance meeting with a strange girl named Juju brings his latent psychic powers to the surface, leading to Koichi's involvement in an underground psychic organization led by an old man named Yomi.

Babel II

Another name for Koichi, a young boy with unlimited psychic powers whose strange dreams lead him to the tower of Babel.



Yomi

Able to read minds, Yomi leads a psychic organization and knows of the coming of Babel II.



Babel II's Three Servants

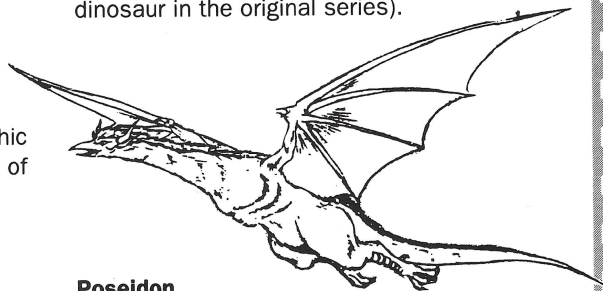
Rodem

A cyborg with a liquid body, Rodem usually appears as a black panther.



Roplos

Appears as a dragon (he appeared as a dinosaur in the original series).



Poseidon

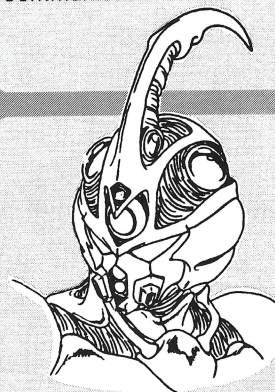
A golem-like being with enormous strength.



Mini-Updates

Bio-Booster Guyver Act II

This 6-volume OAV series picks up immediately after the first OAV series *Bio-Booster Guyver*. Shou must brave a new set of Zoanoids, the "lost numbers," and a special Zoanoid, Enzyme II, to save his best friend Tetsuo and his sister Mizuki from Chronus. Volume one is available now, and volume two is scheduled for release in March from Hero Communications.



Karasu Tengu Kabuto

Based on Buichi Terasawa's (*Goku, Cobra*) feudal day science fiction comic, *Kabuto* originally aired as a television series on NHK's satellite channel. Now Terasawa intends to tell an entirely new story, in the same world he developed in his comic, in an OAV format. While he did not play a major part in producing the television series, Terasawa plans to be closely involved with the production of the OAV—in addition to directing, he is handling the scripting, the continuity, and the character designs for the video. Release date and studio have not yet been set.





On Labor Day, 1991, over 1,700 fans assembled in San Jose, California, for the biggest Japanese animation convention in America—Anime Con '91.

The first convention of its size to devote itself solely to Japanese animation, Anime Con '91 boasted a guest list of over 20 influential figures in the anime field. The GOHs (Guests of Honor) included such well-known manga artists and character designers as Haruhiko Mikimoto, Kenichi Sonoda, Johji Manabe, Hideaki Anno and Yoshiyuki Sadamoto. Fans were so avid to meet these guests that many autograph sessions entailed a two- to three-hour wait in lines that stretched out of the building.

In addition to providing an opportunity for fans to meet their idols, Anime Con '91 was the first convention to assemble together in one place the major American companies involved with Japanese animation. Companies represented included Central Park Media, AnimEigo, U.S. Renditions and Streamline Pictures.

Con events included a banquet with the GOHs, an art show, and a charity auction for a stricken anime fan in the Bay Area, Anne Schubert. In the Dealer's Room, a variety of

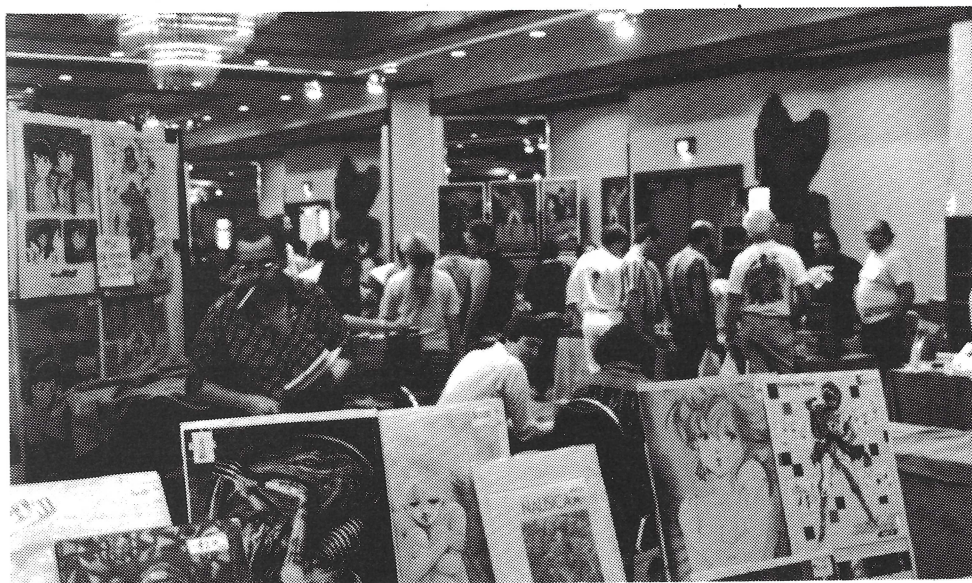


The symbol of AnimeCon: Captain Harlock

goods were peddled by Americans and Japanese alike; the American dealers claimed they sold a year's worth of goods in one day.

Entertainment came in the form of three video channels, two video rooms and a film room running 16 and 35 mm films cuts. An endless assortment of animation, both old and new, was available at the convention 24 hours a day throughout the entire weekend.

For those of you who didn't number among the attendees, ANIMAG has compiled a



The dealers room

set of on-the-spot interviews as well as some amusing anecdotes and information "from the inside."

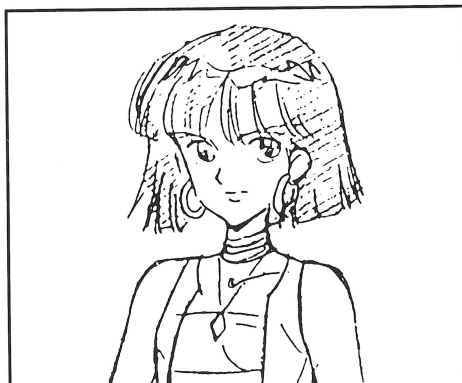
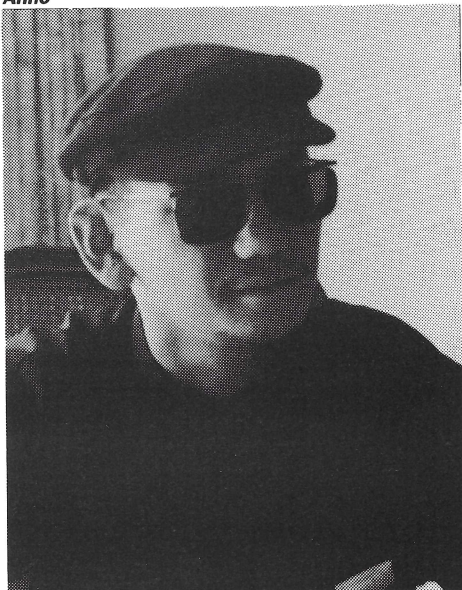
Guests of Honor

Hideaki Anno

Work: art director for *Wings of Oneamis*, director for *Aim for the Top!* *Gunbuster* and *Nadia: Secret of Blue Water*.

Childhood anime influences: Anno especially liked *Future Boy Conan* (an early Miyazaki project) and Leiji Matsumoto's *Space Cruiser Yamato*.

Anno



Nadia

Career notes: Inspired by his middle-school art teacher, Anno's earliest ambition was to teach. Deciding instead to seek a career in anime, Anno worked part-time at a small animation studio while in college. Now a director at Gainax, he concentrates on quality-control, okaying or rejecting final animation sequences. In the event that a staff animator can't do his job, Anno will step in and do it himself. He says that since *Yamato* is one of his favorite shows, he especially enjoys animating battleship combat scenes.

When asked about his newest series, Anno attributes *Nadia's* huge popularity to the fact that it took the best aspects of all other popular anime series—that and the characters. In fact, *Nadia* recently managed to bump *Nausicaa* from her permanent spot at the top of *Animage* magazine's annual character popularity contest.

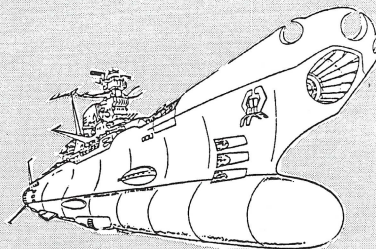
Con Insider: Fan on the Street

All animation fans remember their very first exposure to anime—that first show that really caught their attention, that captured the imagination and fired an interest in Japanese animation.

In a quick survey of fans at AnimeCon, we found an interesting variety of both new and old growth fans.

Which of these fans are you?

Mach Go-Go-Go (*Speed Racer*): "I go back to *Speed Racer*, at least. I go back to *MarineBoy*." A select few of the adult fans traced their history back to these shows, which were some of the first English-translations since *Astro Boy*.



Space Cruiser Yamato (*Star Blazers*): "Definitely *Star Blazers*." The *Star Blazers* phenomenon brought on board a large segment of the current anime fandom. In fact, many of the Japanese guests listed this grand opera science fiction classic as the show that sparked their interest in a career in animation.

Super Dimension Fortress Macross (*Robotech*): Of all the people surveyed, the largest group listed *Robotech* as their first show, probably because the majority of people at AnimeCon were from what is sometimes called "the *Robotech* generation." It seems that the influence of *Macross* on anime consciousness cannot be underestimated.

Also Noted:

Battle of the Planets: a surprising number of people said that the English version of *Science Ninja Gatchaman* was the show that interested them in Japanese animation.

Bubblegum Crisis This show is popular with a wide range of fans for its combination science fiction/pretty girl action format.

Mobile Suit Gundam The angst-ridden world of *Gundam* is an enduring, everpresent classic always noted by serious mecha-action fans. ■

Anno feels that Japanese animation is made primarily for a Japanese audience and so tends to be "trapped" by cultural references. He was particularly surprised at *Yamato's* popularity in the states, since it was intended very specifically for Japanese viewers, but is very pleased to see anime crossing the cultural barrier in America.

In all of his projects, Anno tries to depict ambitious, goal-oriented characters because in Japan "many people are just playing around, doing nothing with their lives" or working at jobs they dislike. In short, he says, they have no goals. In *Nadia* and *Oneami's*, he wanted to show how each character has a goal they strive to achieve.

When asked about the future of animation in Japan, Anno predicts that the anime industry, currently much too large, will soon collapse and then be rebuilt from scratch. For the last five years, he says, every studio has been struggling—there are just too many productions and not enough manpower. But he is prepared for the impending crash; as he puts it, he is "on Noah's ark right now, just floating around."

Johji Manabe

Work: creator of manga series *Caravan Kid*, *Capricorn* and *Outlanders*.

Childhood manga influences: As a boy, Manabe was strongly influenced by the artist Shotaro Ishinomori, creator of *Cyborg 009*, and later by Leiji Matsumoto. He also credits *Star Wars*, and any and all science fiction stories and tales set in space, as a major influence.

Manabe



Kahm from *Outlanders*

Career notes: Manabe has been drawing continually since childhood. He made the jump from fan to professional thanks to the manga industry's amateur manga contests, in which aspiring artists submit their works in the hope of winning prize money and name recognition. Manabe won his first contest at the age of 17, garnering an astronomical ¥10,000 (about \$60 or \$70) for a comedic tale of bungling amateur pirates.

Manabe kept entering contests and winning prizes and soon began to acquire a reputation. At first, Manabe had to "hustle" to get his work published, but before too long publishers were calling him to check on his current activities and solicit work. Now, at 27, he is a full-time manga artist and "president of Studio Katsu-don." While his studio is actually a one-man operation, Manabe explains that it was set up as a tax dodge.

Manabe names *Outlanders* as his favorite published work to date. (An English translation of the manga series was published in the U.S. by Dark Horse comics.) It took three years to complete. He says that, while he always had a definite idea of the beginning and end of the story, the middle evolved as he worked. In regard to the distinctive organic spacecraft of the series, he notes that he had originally intended to use metal spacecraft "like in the movies," but his publisher thought this would be too common and asked him to do something different and original.

Manabe is very pleased to see *Outlanders* achieving popularity in the "science fiction kingdom" of America. He expected the first imported Japanese manga would be "exotic," oriental-flavored stories laden with ninja and samurai and is gratified to see that science

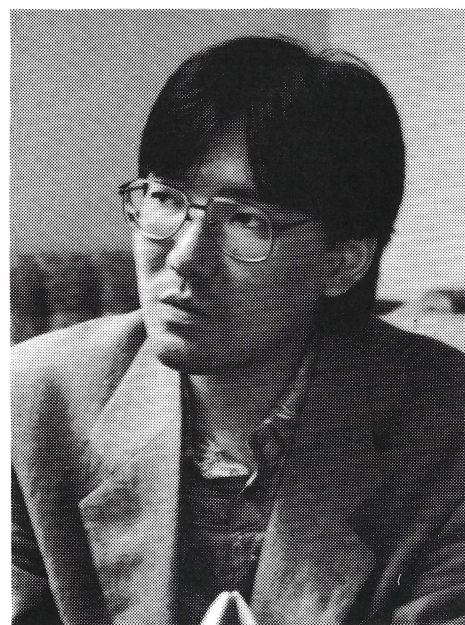
fiction comics far outnumber stories about stoic ninjas. This warm reaction to Japanese manga gives him confidence, Manabe says, but now he is worried that the selection is too one-sided and hopes that more genres will be represented in the future.

Manabe is an avid manga fan. He has a taste for stories with a historical setting and enjoys researching, writing and drawing his own historically-based manga about ancient Japan. His favorite American medium is animation, especially *Tom and Jerry* cartoons. He hasn't seen many American comic books, but says that "I love *The Flaming Carrot*."

Manabe, who likes meeting his fans and tries to mingle with them regularly, comments that the fans he's met at AnimeCon are generally older and more mature than Japanese fans.

Haruhiko Mikimoto

Work: character designer for *Super Dimension Fortress Macross*, *Macross* movie *Do You Remember Love?*, *Aim For The Top!*



Mikimoto

Gunbuster and *Mobile Suit Gundam 0080—War In The Pocket*; creator of manga series *Marionette Generation*.

Childhood anime influences: An only child, Mikimoto spent much of his youth at home watching TV. While he credits *Space Cruiser Yamato* as an influence, it was Yoshikazu Yasuhiko's character designs for *Mobile Suit Gundam* that inspired him to pursue a career in anime; in fact, the world of *Gundam* fandom provided his avenue into the animation industry.

Con Insider: Masquerade

By Julie Davis

Always one of the more popular events at a con, the masquerade at AnimeCon was no exception. Staged as a series of skits, the masquerade featured costumes from *Gundam 0080: War in the Pocket*, *Rhea Gall Force*, *Macross*, *Megazone*, and not one, but two sets of the Dirty Pair.

Although the Masquerade was not officially a contest, prizes were awarded for the best costume by scattering items across the floor and instructing the participants to make a suicide grab for them. The result was an amusing scramble of limbs and spandex as the participants vied for anime goods ranging from a CD soundtrack of *Akira* to a free pass to AnimeCon '92.

Since there were two sets of them, the Dirty Pair monopolized the evening. Inspired by *Bill and Ted's Bogus Journey*, the Pair was put on trial by the Grim Reaper for crimes committed, including shooting everyone in sight, mass genocide, etc. Song and dance routines and cameos by other animation characters followed, including a particularly amusing aside with Desslar, leader of the Gamilons and his Gamilon Express Card.

(Don't leave home without it!)

The final skit consisted of an assortment of animation villains, including Desslar of *Yamato*, Gargoyle of *Nadia*, etc., kidnapping Guest of Honor Ken-Ichi Sonoda and holding him hostage. Desslar keenly observed that since villains are typically better dressed, more stylish, and have more personality than the heroes (not to mention their own theme music), they deserve to be the stars. Sonoda is subsequently rescued by the heroes, led by the

double Dirty Pair. (This was doubtless an unforgettable moment for Sonoda, since he was surrounded by no less than four scantily-clad, well-endowed female fans.) Unfortunately, the Dirty Pair attempt to save the day and wind up killing the heroes instead of the villains. But the Pair quickly corrects this oversight, leaving the stage draped with the bodies of animation legends. The Grim Reaper arrives to clean up the mess, freeing Sonoda from the grasp of his anime sirens. ■

Dirty Pair: TV and OAV version



Career notes: Before officially working in animation, Mikimoto worked on a variety of *Gundam* fanzines, mooks (magazine/books) and roman albums, including one for Studio

Nue, a design studio that produces books as well as art and plots for anime series. He went on to do more non-anime related work for Nue before finally becoming involved in the planning stages of anime shows,

including his lauded role in *Macross*.

Ironically, although *Macross* had been merely tacked on to the series proposals Nue submitted to their sponsors, it was the project chosen to go into production. After the show was approved, it was in development for about a year. During this time, Mikimoto contributed many story ideas and a full complement of character designs. Such lengthy incubation periods, Mikimoto notes, are luxuries that anime creators no longer have—they must now get the show on the air quickly before people lose interest. Since then, Mikimoto has gone on to do many more character designs for a variety of shows, as well as illustrations (including Yoshiyuki Tomino's *Gundam* novels) and manga.

When designing characters, Mikimoto says, he tries to give them "a presence or existence" instead of worrying over details like their eyes, nose, etc. He says, "I ask myself, what kind of person is this going to be? How is he going to move, how is he going to laugh? When he laughs, does he open his mouth

One of Mikimoto's most popular characters, Lynn Minmay



wide or cover his mouth?" All this thought goes into the character before he even begins drawing.

Like many of the other guests, Mikimoto is nostalgically reminded of the Japanese anime fandom of yesteryear by American fans. He recalls the *Yamato* days—before a massive publishing industry provided fans with posters and books—when fans had to go to the animation studios to ask for diagrams and line art. He hopes that the passion, curiosity, and hunger for material and information lasts longer here than it did in Japan. It probably means more to you, he feels, if you have to work for it.

Mikimoto foresees a continuing boom in the anime industry but lower budgets and a decline in quality. Viewers may have to choose,



Gloval from Macross

he says, between nice art with minimal movement or good motion and mediocre art. He also notes a continuing diversification in subject matter, with genres like fantasy-adventure becoming more commercially viable. For example, *Record of Lodoss War* would never have made it past the planning stages a couple of years ago. He also expects new techniques such as computer animation to become increasingly popular.

Yoshiyuki Sadamoto

Work: character designer for *Robot Carnival's Meiji Mechanical Civilization Story* and *Wings of Oneamis*; art director for *Aim for the Top!* *Gunbuster*; character designer and art director for *Nadia: Secret of Blue Water*.

Con Insider: The Panels

Fans who attended the panels discovered some interesting information not available through traditional channels.

Kenichi Sonoda

During the convention it became apparent that Sonoda has a great affection for *doujin*-



Early designs for Priss

shi, fanzines that range anywhere from hom-age to pornographic parody). In fact, it frequently influences his work, although he admits that his friends consider him somewhat strange for his attachment to this type

of manga. He says he comes back from *doujin-shi* cons with armfuls of booklets and, as he begins to leaf through them, notices, "This is nice art. There's some nice erotica in here. Hey! That's Priss!"

One member of the AnimeCon staff told of the time Sonoda saw a lecherous *doujin-shi* about *Bubblegum Crisis*. Far from being offended, he liked it so much that he bought it. Soon after, he placed a public ad for an assistant. When the samples began to come in, one of them looked mysteriously familiar. Checking through his stacks of *doujin-shi*, Sonoda discovered that it was the same person who did the *Bubblegun Crisis doujin-shi*. The artist was promptly hired.

Another amusing anecdote concerned Sonoda's manager, who asked him to make Priss' concert dress really sexy. Sonoda finally settled on what looked like a bondage outfit of leather strips. The manager okayed the costume.

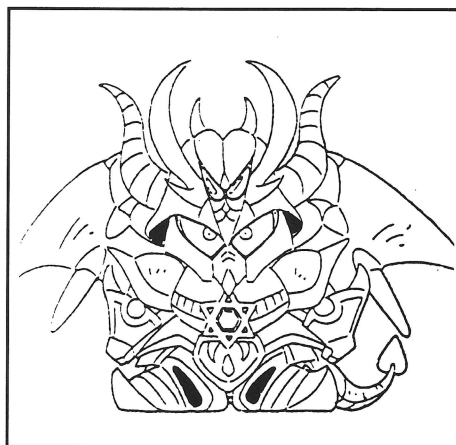
Con rumor has it that Sonoda came to the auction with an autographed *doujin-shi* to sell for charity. This particular *doujin-shi* sold for an alleged \$151.

Hideaki Anno

Anno is a vegetarian. He doesn't like guns, but is very fond of airplanes and ships. His reason: guns, unlike ships and aircraft, can be directly used to kill men, animals, and other living things. Planes and ships, on the other hand, while they can also be used to kill, do it in a more indirect manner.

Discussing present human technology and values, Anno explains that he likes technology but not the values that go along with it.

He prefers a vacuum cleaner to a broom, and would like to have a refrigerator. He believes that Hayao Miyazaki, however, dislikes both the technology and the value system, commenting that Miyazaki's thoughts are reflected in his films.



One of the many Super-Deformed Gundams

Nao Minda and Kimiko Higuchi

Nao Minda and Kimiko Higuchi are parody manga artists. Minda currently works at Gainax, where he develops computer games such as "Cybernetic High School IV Ape Hunter-J" and "Super Battle Skin Panic." Higuchi, one of the few women artists at the con, does "soft" parody for magazines such as *Cybercomics*.

Minda commented that, recently, the original creators of stories are making their own parodies, for example the infamous *Super-Deformed Gundam*. These parodies are usually cute and nice and do

Childhood anime influences: As a child, Sadamoto was inspired by the work of Go Nagai, Leiji Matsumoto, and Hayao Miyazaki. Particular anime series from this period that influenced him include Matsumoto's *Space Cruiser Yamato*, Miyazaki's *Future Boy Conan* and the *Lupin III* series. Later, as he was entering the anime field, the work of Katsuhiro Otomo and Sakaguchi Hisashi (known as the right-hand man of Osamu Tezuka) provided additional inspiration.

Career notes: While still a student, Sadamoto worked part-time on *Super Dimension Fortress Macross* drawing "genga," the pencil artwork from which cels are drawn. While working on *Macross*, he met Hideaki Anno and Hiroyuki Yamaga, who did the continuity direction and

storyboards for episode 9. When they invited him to do the opening animation for the DaiCon anime convention, Sadamoto created the famous DaiCon "bunny girl," his first widely recognized character.

After graduating from art school, he worked for the Telecom animation studio on *Famous Detective Holmes* and *Castle of Cagliostro*. Nine months after starting his job at Telecom, Anno, Yamaga and Toshio Okada (now president of Gainax) asked him if he wanted to be part of "something big"—the development of what became Gainax.

Sadamoto is currently experimenting with manga. He would like to try his hand at a "real-life" story, perhaps a love story set in a realistic world with a racer protagonist so he

nothing to damage or change the original character or story images. Minda's parodies usually have some "evil" to them, but with the increasing number of parodies done by the original creators, his type of satire is getting hard to do. This is part of the reason why Minda has not done any parody manga work for about an year.

After the animation parody panel, many people gathered to get Minda's and Higuchi's autographs. However, Anno was having his autograph session only 20 feet away. As a result, many people wandered into other line without even knowing who Minda and Higuchi were. Amusingly enough, at one point the lines for Minda and Higuchi became even longer than the line for Anno.

Minda drew lots of pictures of Minky Momo. Minda said, "She's the easiest to draw, because even if I make a few mistakes, it still looks like Minky Momo. A few years ago, I could draw her with my eyes closed." Of the many people who, when asked for a request, said that "anything is fine," he commented, "In Japan if someone says anything is O.K., I become nasty and draw a strange looking middle-aged man or a rock. But since this is in America, I'll be nice."

Character design panel with Sonoda, Haruhiko Mikimoto and Yoshiyuki Sadamoto

At the character design panel, the guests were asked whether or not they made their characters look "western" in order to appeal to eastern audiences. They generally agreed that they do, almost subconsciously—not

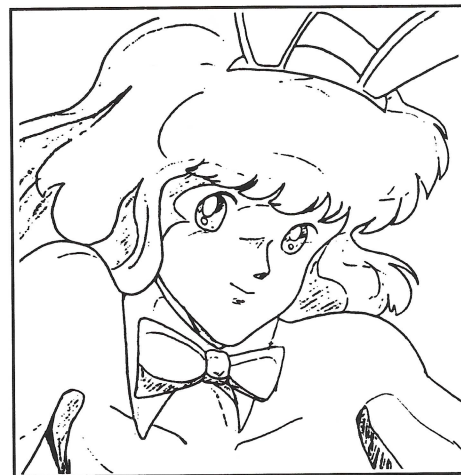
necessarily to appeal to Western audiences but rather because it seems natural and what they "should" look like, since they grew up seeing this style of drawing.

Some friendly antagonisms also surfaced at the panel. At one point, when Sadamoto began harrasing Sonoda about his *sukebe* (lecherous) tendencies and his *doujin-shi* influences, Sonoda quickly countered, "Well, who was the one who started with the bouncing bustline?" (in reference to Sadamoto's work as art director on *Aim For The Top! Gunbuster*).



The famous bouncing bustline

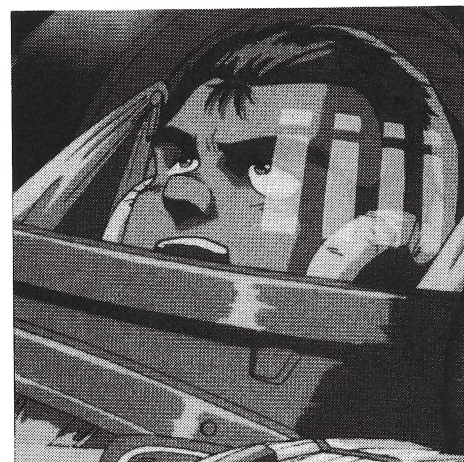
At the end of the panel the audience thanked Sadamoto for popularizing bouncing busts in today's animation industry. ■



Sadamoto's DaiCon bunny girl

can draw cars and motorcycles. But since Gainax focuses on fantasy and science-fiction stories, there is little chance he'll be able to pursue this idea there. As soon as work tapers off at the studio, he says he'll probably leave Gainax.

Sadamoto feels that today's American anime fandom is very similar to the Japanese



Shirotsugu Raadat from Oneamiis

fandom of fifteen years ago. He comments that anime fans in Japan have gone somewhat "underground" because of the anime-related slayings that occurred in Japan a few years ago (see sidebar). It's a pleasure for him to see fandom as it is.

In the light of the recent glut in anime shows, Sadamoto predicts fewer projects and better quality in the future. Ten years ago, he notes, a large number of animation projects for the American TV market were sent to Japan. While this work paid well, the Japanese animators never got to see the finished work and thus missed out on the pride of accomplishment.

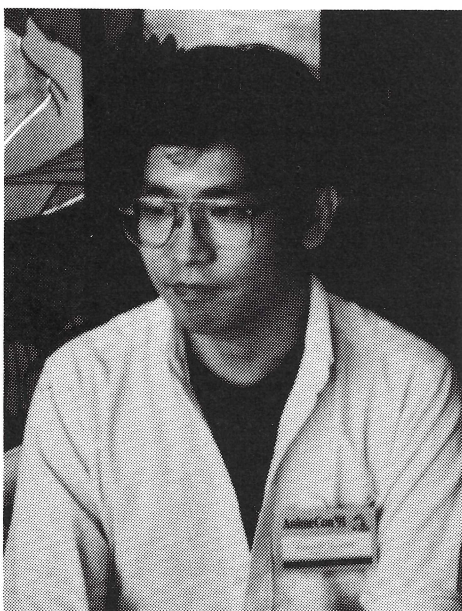
Now that the money isn't as good, it's easier for animators to pass on projects.

Kenichi Sonoda

Work: character designer for *Gall Force* and *Bubblegum Crisis* OAV series, *Wanna-Be's* and *Riding Bean* OAVs; creator of manga series *Gunsmith Cats*.

Childhood anime influences: Sonoda recalls being very impressed by the character designs for the *Lupin III* TV series. Later, he was also influenced by Leiji Matsumoto's *Space Cruiser Yamato* and by Yasuhiro Yasuhiko's character designs for *Mobile Suit Gundam*.

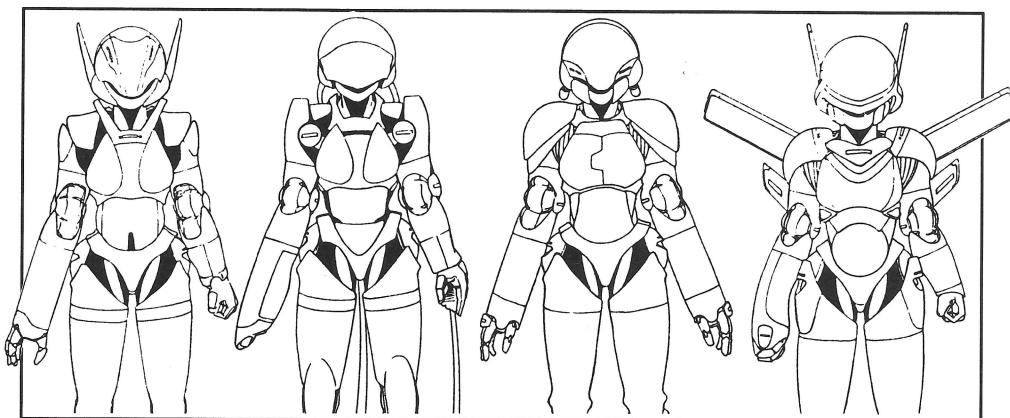
Career notes: Sonoda's serialized *Gall Force* feature in the modelling magazine *Model Graphix* was so popular that it ran for only three or four months before it was suggested



Sonoda

that the story be animated. Sonoda did the character designs for the resulting OAV series and has been involved in anime ever since. He recently resigned from Artmic studios to do freelance work on comics projects like his ongoing manga series *Gunsmith Cats*.

Although this was not Sonoda's first visit to America, he reports that he is continually impressed by the expansiveness of the landscape. While visiting the U.S. recently in connection with work on his *Riding Bean* OAV, he drove out to the desert in a rental car to experience the panoramic view. It was the first time in his life, he says, that he had ever seen the horizon in every direction at once.



Hardsuits from the Bubble Gum Crisis series

Heavily influenced by the storyboarding technique and setting of American action films, Sonoda says that without the movies *Gone in 60 Seconds* (which starts with a man stealing a car in less than sixty seconds) and *The Blues Brothers*, *Riding Bean* would not have been possible. Sonoda has used Chicago, the setting of *The Blues Brothers*, many times as a backdrop for his anime and manga work, though he has yet to have the opportunity to visit it in person. Sonoda prefers Chicago to New York,

which he says "is so international that it wouldn't be fun" to use as a setting.

Sonoda wonders whether it would be possible to use the "very advanced" American mail-order industry to make video anime available to fans in areas of the country where anime paraphernalia is hard to come by. He is rather surprised by the range of ages among American fans, not to mention their politeness. He is very happy, he says, to be with them. ■

The Miyazaki incident

By Takayuki Karahashi

The "Miyazaki Incident," as it came to be called, dealt a staggering blow to anime fandom in Japan. Once it was discovered that the exceptionally brutal murders of four young girls had been committed by an animation fan, the press and the public joined in condemning the anime and manga industries. The situation was made worse by the fact that the murderer's name was the same as one of anime's most beloved creators: Miyazaki.

From August of 1988 to the summer of 1989, there were four related incidents of little girls being kidnapped. It soon became clear that the young girls had been hideously murdered. To add to the horror of the situation, the murderer made a habit of mailing the family their child's remains.

Despite police efforts—although many consider the case an extreme example of police incompetence—the suspect was not taken into custody until the father of the fifth potential victim caught him taking nude photos of his 6-year-old daughter. The

suspect, Tsutomu Miyazaki, turned himself in to the police, although the police would not



Akemi from Urotsuki Doji

have had the evidence to warrant his arrest until September, over a month after he had turned himself in.

When investigators opened up Miyazaki's apartment, they found nearly 6,000 video tapes of animation and horror movies and

Con Insider: Reflections From the Inside

by Mogra

Thursday. Officially, AnimeCon doesn't start until tomorrow, but energy is already overflowing. The hallways and hotel lobby bustle with staff, gofers, and early attendees. Meanwhile, last minute snafus foul up the works, including the disappointing news that Leiji Matsumoto will not be able to attend the convention. A Gainax staffer laments, "I worked three weeks to get Matsumoto's illustration for the convention's program book cover!" All his effort has come to naught.

Friday. It's quite a sight to see sworn enemies working together like old friends. Maybe the convention has a special magic that lets factions bury their hatchets. Or maybe the common anime cause brings them together... Then again, it's probably anime that made them enemies to begin with.

As for Mogra, Mogra has to interpret for a panel this afternoon. Mogra tries hard to translate the panel's side remarks and mindless jokes. The audience laughs, though sometimes nervously. Mogra's reputation is tarnished. It's decided Mogra is good for getting cheap laughs, but the more social events like banquets and press interviews should be handled by Mogra's more mature colleague.

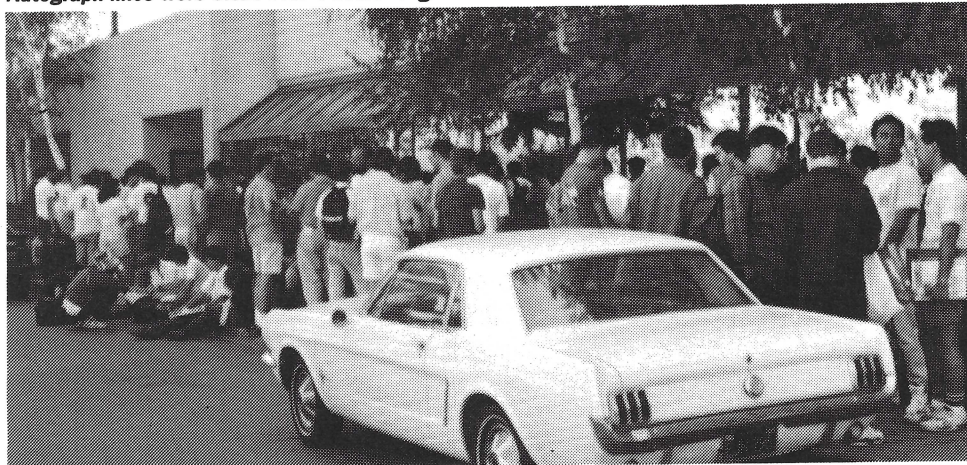
Perhaps it's natural for a Guest of Honor at a convention to have an entourage, but the sole manga artist GOH has a particularly long one. There is the manga artist himself, his manager from Gainax, three of his assistants, and two interpreters, including Mogra. Mogra is the type who wouldn't be caught dead in an entourage, but there has to be an exception once in a while.

Tonight is the guest reception, and the manga artist has left his assistants in their room to catch up on all the anime they miss out on while they work for him. But it seems the manga artist's real fans must be holding out for Saturday's banquet, as only a few faces come to talk to him. Mogra waits in vain for his debut as the glamorous interpreter of the rich and famous, chatting and making small talk with the abandoned celebrity until the Dirty Pair enters the room. The manga artist poses for a few photo opportunities with the Dirty Pair and then retires to his room to watch anime on the in-circuit TV. The other GOHs remain for more photo opportunities and general socializing.

Saturday. Disaster! Mogra panics and runs around the hotel like mad. Con security blasts Mogra for running in the hallway (darn Mogra for not reading the rules in the program book), but it is too late. Mogra has set a bad example followed by hordes of kids, who run from one GOH autograph table at one end of the hotel to the other autograph table at the other end. No matter how fast they run, they may not be fast enough. The late-comer GOH, a Real Popular Character Designer, just started signing autographs. Some kids have already been waiting in his line for as long as six hours.

At noon, Mogra is once again at work, interpreting at the manga artists panel. Behind-the-scene stories such as the manga artist drawing in one of his friends who desperately wanted to be in manga as a comical alien slave

Autograph lines were often over 4 hours long



several boxes of animation magazines and fanzines of all types. The press took home most of Miyazaki's belongings, never to be seen by police eyes again (yet another show of police incompetence). Society learned of Miyazaki's lifestyle at the expense of valuable incriminating evidence.

Miyazaki's life was that of an *otaku*, otherwise equivalent to the English colloquial *fanboy*. A good portion of his video collection was pornographic animation of the likes of *Cream Lemon*, and apparently he also built up a library of rare vintage TV episodes through associations with various video trading clubs. Miyazaki's own bargaining chip was the now-censored episode 12 of *Ultra Seven* (sequel to *Ultraman*), which fans were sure to go out of their way to possess. Furthermore, even the pseudonym he had used when writing letters to the families, Yuko Imada, turned out to be a policewoman character from a favorite comic book.

Instantly, the word *otaku* became a household word, losing any innocent connotation it previously had. As a result, all fanboys came to be regarded as sociopaths, and the animation and comics they devoured the source of sociopathic behavior. Furthermore, the whole incident gave a whole new meaning to the

word "Miyazaki animation."

Media condemnation of Miyazaki eventually reached ridiculous heights when



Jung Freud from a strip computer game

notorious murderer Sagawa denounced him. Sagawa, a Japanese exchange student in Paris, killed his girlfriend and was deported back to Japan. Sagawa was quoted as saying, "Miyazaki is crazy. Even I wouldn't do something like that." ■



The English Adaptation panel

named Nao draw laughs from the audience, but Mogra soon realizes the audience is asking the same question every five minutes.

After a two-hour break, Mogra is back at work as interpreter at the manga artist's autograph session. Mogra is delighted to go through the apex of Mogra's interpreting career, handling highly difficult single-word translations such as "Kahm," "Batya," and even occasionally the two-worder "Geobaldi please." But the intense brain-frying session soon comes to an end and it is already time for the GOH banquet.

There is more to the convention this night, but Mogra loses it after celebrating the con mid-point with champagne and bubbling barley. Mogra starts to hear voices and is convinced he has become a mind-reading esper. The next morning, however, Mogra only wakes up with a hangover.

Sunday. After recovering, Mogra spends the early afternoon at another highly demanding autograph session. While agonizing for the interpreter, autograph sessions are a breeze for the artist since he only has to draw requests and sign his name over and over again. After an autograph session, the interpreter is completely shattered, while all the artist has to deal with is shaky fingers with mild muscle spasms.

Not realizing how easy it is for the artist to draw for hours on end, the gofers instructed the fans that only the first forty in line would get a sketch. This is a great surprise for the manga artist and his manager, so they allow every fan a sketch. Later, Mogra finds out that the manga artist was the only GOH with such a generous program, but then again, the manga artist admits that autograph sessions back home in

Japan are far more demanding. There, ill-behaved fans have no reservations about coming up to his hotel room. Compared to that, the AnimeCon crowds are like angels, he says.

After the animation fanzine panel, which was easily the best panel at the convention and therefore too good for Mogra's words to describe, Mogra goes out for dinner with friends. Among them are an interpreter colleague and a man from Gainax by the name of Koichiro Ota (who goes by the pseudonym of "Nao Minda"). Doesn't that name sound familiar? Mogra is sure you recall the name of the coach in *Gunbuster*. In fact, every character in *Gunbuster*, except Jung Freud, is named after a Gainax person. Upon hearing that, Mogra's colleague remarked, "Wow, I didn't know there was a person by the name of Jung Freud at Gainax." Mogra is very happy this

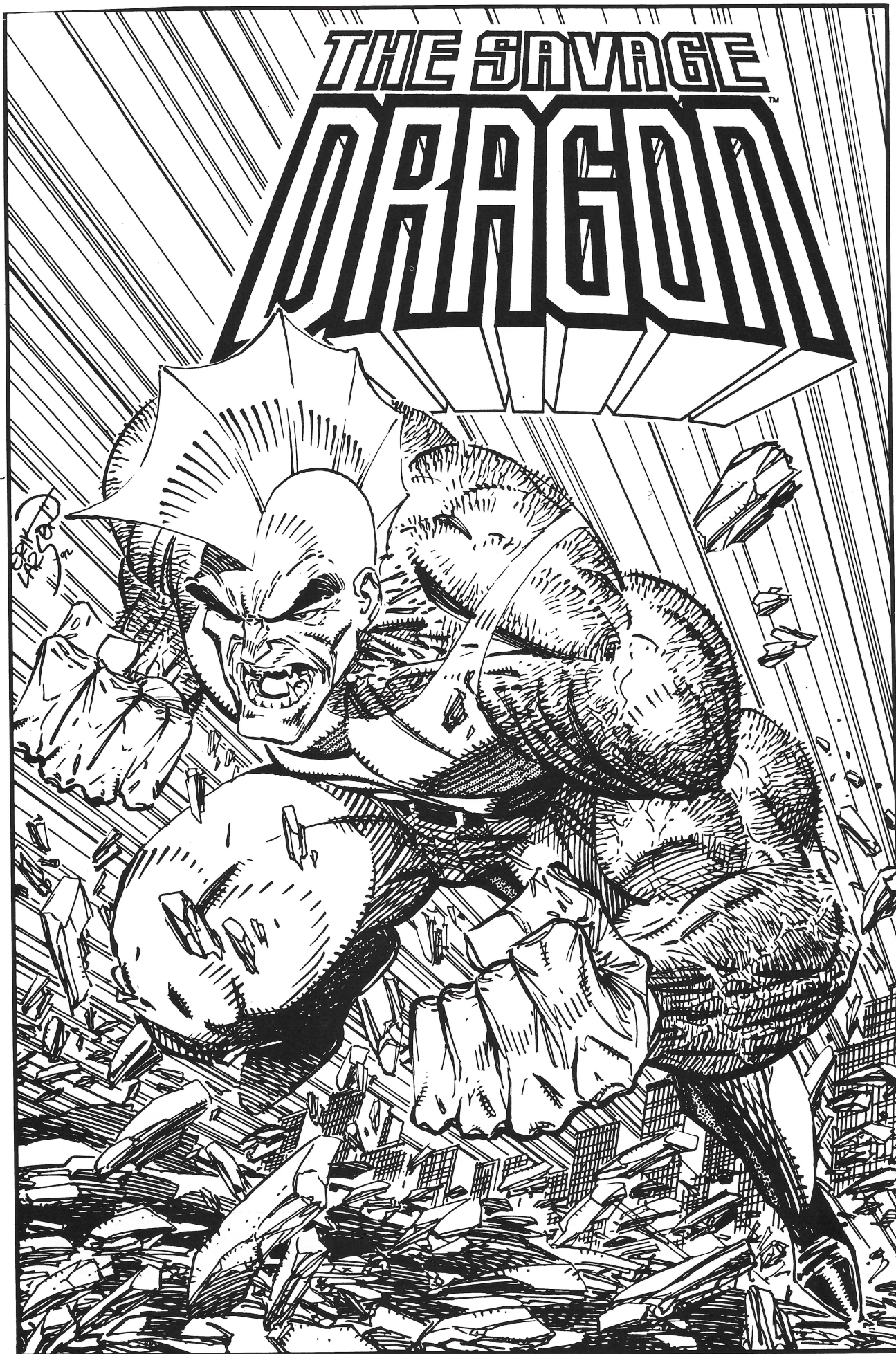
colleague/friend was never a translator or interpreter at an international nuclear weapons treaty conference. By the way, Mr. Ota revealed that he is the proud owner of the *Gunbuster* production cel of Coach Ota's grave.

Monday. With all due respect, it feels like residue day. The manga artist's autograph line is short, and Mogra could easily have gotten in line to get his autograph three or four times. There is not much to do except join the entourage and tour the dealer's room and the art auction. There is also a fundraiser charity auction for a local anime fan who had a stroke. An issue of ANIMAG auctions for \$80. The manga artist is impressed. Mogra is impressed. Perhaps Mogra should buy ANIMAG regularly from now on.

Tuesday. There is a wrap-up party for staff and guests at the hotel poolside. Mogra arrives late, and asks a man from Gainax if anyone has been thrown into the pool. The man from Gainax says no but gets a gleam in his eyes and starts to ask staffers if their watch is waterproof. Meanwhile, Mogra joins his friends at a table, when victims start to follow trajectory paths into the pool. Staffers are prime victims, but even a GOH is not immune. Mogra finds the manga artist to warn him of the impending doom, but he comments that he is safe since he is merely a guest of Gainax, whereas the victim GOH is assimilated into Gainax and is thus fair game. Soon, however, even a fellow American receives a baptism, and Mogra is left wondering if Mogra is spreading around bad karma. The madness eventually dies down, though, and the party comes to a close. ■

Autograph line for Sonoda





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Yuzo Takada's 3x3 Eyes

By Takayuki Karahashi and Dana Fong

In popular Japanese ghost stories, *mitsume kozou* (lit., "three-eyed brat") was the name of a ghost with superhuman powers. The late Osamu Tezuka used this mythical figure as a basis for his story *Three-Eyes is Coming*, in which the main character is the lone descendent of a tribe of three-eyed people. No doubt, Tezuka's story was in turn the basis for *Sazan Eyes*, a popular manga created by Yuzo Takada and currently running in *Young Magazine*. *Sazan Eyes* combines the previous elements of a three-eyed character with supernatural

called "Sanjiyan Unkara" whose existence was considered nothing more than myth until an eccentric Japanese anthropologist (Dr. Fujii) chances upon Pai, the last Sanjiyan Unkara in this world. For over three hundred years Pai has longed to become human, though she herself doesn't know why. After a mysterious incident Dr. Fujii dies, but not before he leaves Pai instructions to find his

son in Shinjuku, Tokyo, on the promise that he will help her become human.

Arriving in the big city, Pai finds herself lost and mugged of all her belongings in the middle of Shinjuku. By sheer chance Yakumo Fujii, Dr. Fujii's son, befriends her and with the help of some *yakuza* (Japanese mafia friends) recovers Pai's belongings...with the exception of her cane. Unfortunately, Pai's



Pai begins her search for Yakumo

powers, Buddhism and Tibetan mythology, all spun together to form an entertaining occult fantasy story.

Deep in the mountains of Tibet, there once lived a tribe of three-eyed humanoid

Characters

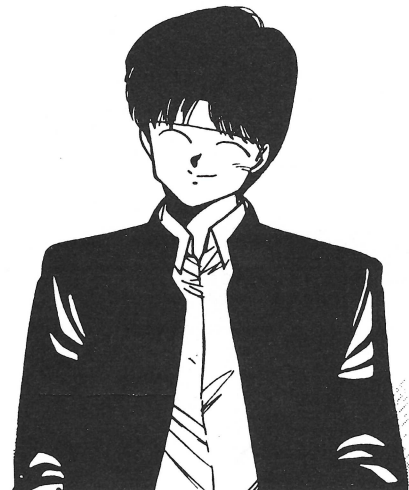


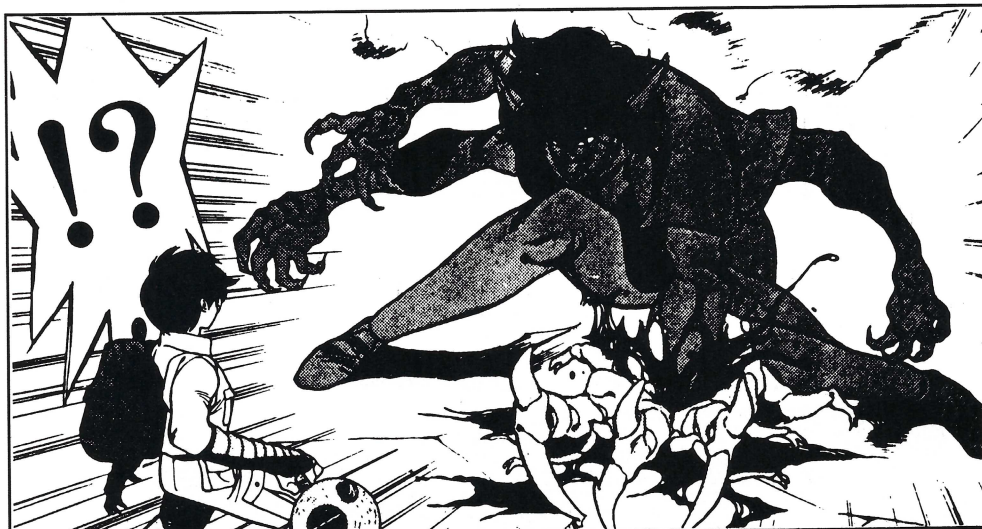
Pai

The title character of the story, Pai leaves the mountains of Tibet in search of the key to becoming human. Almost always cheerful, Pai knows little of her past, except that she has longed to become a human.

Yakumo

The hero of the story, Yakumo was left by his father at a young age and was raised in the streets of Shinjuku. The young and brash Yakumo willingly takes on the seemingly difficult task of turning Pai into a human. Due to a mishap, Yakumo's soul is merged with Pai's making him a Wu, basically a zombie.





Yakumo faces a Iouhou

magical friend Takuhi lives in this cane and once unleashed begins to relentlessly destroy Tokyo. In its blind rage, Takuhi mortally wounds Yakumo before it recognizes Pai. Under her hidden Sanjiyan personality, Pai saves Yakumo the only way she can by taking his soul into herself. Since they now share the same soul Yakumo becomes a Wu, essentially a zombie that cannot be killed unless his Sanjiyan master dies. Taking on his father's oath, Yakumo promises to make Pai a human.

Following his father's instructions, Yakumo takes Pai to Hong Kong to find *Yogekisha*, an occult magazine whose editor is an old friend of Dr. Fujii. After some initial trouble, Yakumo finds *Yogekisha*'s editorial offices, where he meets deputy editor Ling-Ling Li, who provides him with what information she has on the Sanjiyan. It turns out that the secret to turning a Sanjiyan into a human lies in a grotesque statuette called the *Figure of Man*. This statuette just happens to be in the possession of a secret Sanjiyan cult. Its leader, Madame Huang, requests *Yogekisha*'s

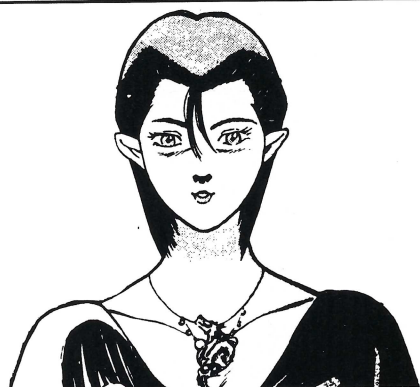
help under the pretense of investigating the mysterious death of her husband. In reality, Huang is suspicious of the magazine after its editor had been caught spying on the cult's activities.

After spending some time at Madame Huang's mansion, Yakumo and friends discover the location of the *Figure of Man*, but at the same time the cult discovers the existence of a Sanjiyan (Pai) and Wu (Yakumo). In a subsequent skirmish the figurine becomes lost, and Yakumo and the others leave, never learning of the cult's existence.

Later stories involve the recovery of the statuette, as well as their clashes with the Sanjiyan cult and other mythical beings, as the adventures of Yakumo's quest to make Pai human continue.

An English adaptation of *Sazan Eyes* is available from San Francisco-based Studio Proteus, which released the first of five monthly installments beginning late June '91. Plans to adapt further volumes are in the works.

The popularity of *Sazan Eyes* has also (not surprisingly) sparked a three-part OAV series, the first volume of which was released July 25, 1991. At this point, there's no telling how far the popularity of *Sazan Eyes* will take Pai and Yakumo—perhaps a *Sazan Eyes* movie isn't out of the question. Ultimately, the series' fans will be the judge. ■



Madame Huang

The widowed supporter of Yakumo and Ling-Ling by day and the leader of the sinister Sanjiyan cult by night, Huang hopes to tap the Sanjiyan's power of granting immortality and then rid the Earth of man's lowly existence (or vice versa). Though her main objective is to get through to the master Sanjiyan, Huang keeps her eyes on Pai as a backup. As the other enemy Wu continually attempts to take Pai, Pai's peace stands on a fine balance of power between him and Huang's demons.

Ling-Ling Li

Deputy editor of *Yogekisha* until Huang turns the editor Aguri into stone and he ends up missing. After subsuming the position as editor, she transforms *Yogekisha* into a soldier of fortune/fortune-seeker organization that will exorcise any ghost and seek a treasure to the end of the Earth, for the right fee.



Wu

A mortal turned immortal by sharing its soul with a Sanjiyan. As long as the Sanjiyan it shares its soul with lives, it can neither die nor age.



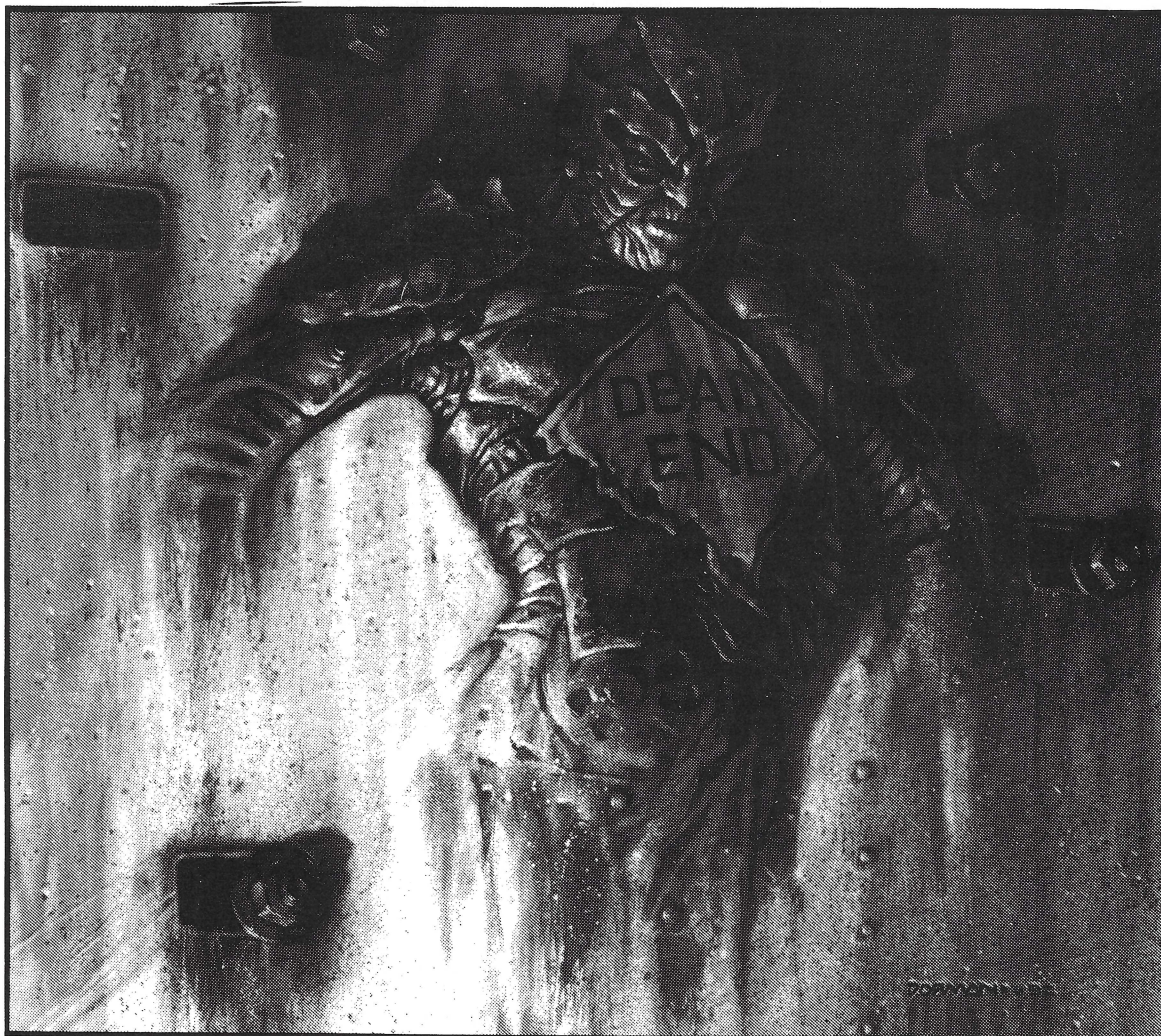
Sanjiyan

A race of humanoids that is closely human but isn't quite so.



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INTERVIEW

By Abra Greenspan

GREENSPAN: Carl, how did you get involved with *Robotech*?

MACEK: It was kind of a weird set of circumstances. I did a lot of research for the motion picture industry in the late seventies and early eighties. But I ended up leaving the entertainment industry in favor of running an art gallery



The man himself, Carl Macek

with my wife. We were selling original art from motion pictures and animated films. We had a lot of material from Japanese animated films. As it turned out a company named Harmony Gold was looking for art for a particular Japanese title and I was the only person in the U.S. who had any.

Well, one thing led to another and I eventually went to work for them as a producer and developer of animated properties. The

first project I worked on was a 90-minute video cassette adaptation, the first three episodes of *Macross*. It was a fairly literal adaptation. The success of this modest effort spurred Harmony Gold to try to market a complete television series. When they did sell the project, it had metamorphosed into something called *Robotech*. My job was to take three completely unrelated series and turn them into one big story. I rewrote the original stories while attempting to keep the essence of the original Japanese drama intact. By the nature of the project I had to incorporate new plot points and story elements which would unify these diverse series. *Robotech* became fairly successful and spawned comics, toys, all sorts of ancillary products. I subsequently worked on a lot of other things that didn't show in the United States, but did show all over the world.

GREENSPAN: Such as?

MACEK: For example, I was asked to take two series designed by Matsumoto and turn them into a television series. I took the original *Captain Harlock* [*Space Pirate Captain Harlock*] and the *Queen of a Thousand Years* [*Millenium Queen*] series and combined them into *Captain Harlock and the Queen of a Thousand Years* in order to get enough episodes to syndicate. Again, the concept was to keep the characters and storylines basically intact, but for this project I was forced to eliminate some of the secondary characters who were just comic relief. The result was pretty interesting. It's a very complicated story; it's even been described by hard-core science fiction television critics as the most complicated science fiction story ever on television. Very, very unique project.

GREENSPAN: What do you mean when you say complicated?

MACEK: The program was a 65-episode serial,

so that is 32-1/2 hours of continuous storytelling. Of course, *Robotech* was 85 episodes, but that one was broken up into three separate plot lines spanning fifty odd years. *Captain Harlock and the Queen of a Thousand Years* all takes place in the space of several months. People tend to overly criticize the fact that I sometimes cut stuff from the original source material when I worked with Harmony Gold. I didn't do it because I wanted to. I did it out of necessity...I was told to put together a series by my employer. The main thing that I felt was absolutely necessary to eliminate for a Western audience is what I call "ethnic gestures." There is a kind of smile which often appears in Japanese cartoons. It's a cliché for them, but looks awkward to the majority of the American public who are not familiar with Japanese animation. A television show is different than a comic book. A million people can see it just by tuning in.



One of *Robotech*'s most popular characters, Rick Hunter

So, what you try to do is homogenize the final product as much as possible, but keep the editing to a minimum. In some cases I think we actually improved the content.

Tatsunoko Production Co., Ltd., the Japanese studio who produced the various series that eventually became *Robotech*, was amazed at the clarity of the work. Even though it was not literal, in many instances it was authentic to the spirit of the Japanese original. That is a key factor in the work I did at Harmony Gold. Now that I'm working as an independent producer, I prefer to do adaptations that relate faithfully to the original story.

GREENSPAN: How would you compare Japanese animation to what is being produced here?

MACEK: Totally different. There is animation designed for popular consumption and animation as art, with good stuff and lousy stuff in both these categories. Take Miyazaki's work—pure masterpieces. It wouldn't matter where he worked, or where he came from; the guy's a genius. But then there are banal animated commercials and animated programs that are little more than 30-minute ads for toys and related products. The majority of this stuff is just junk.

The Japanese use a limited number of cels when they produce animation for television or OAVs. That's what they can teach us—how to make something look good with smaller amounts of cels and technique.

GREENSPAN: What is the origin of the name *Robotech*?

MACEK: Now, that's a weird one. Around 1984, Revell toys had gone to Japan and scooped up most of the model kits from a variety of different animated television programs, including *Macross*. Revell planned on putting out a line of plastic model kits called *Robotech*. The line wasn't doing very well on its initial release and they were trying to think of a way to recoup their investment. When they learned that Harmony Gold owned the film rights to several of the shows that they had merchandise from, a deal was (sigh) struck between Revell and Harmony Gold to co-produce the television series. Just so long as Harmony Gold agreed to call the resultant series *Robotech*. But [as for] the origins of robotechnology, or protoculture...well, that stuff all came out of my, uh, warped imagination. As it turned out, Revell never actually followed through with their plans—but the *Robotech* name stuck.

GREENSPAN: How was it that you first got connected with comics and animation?

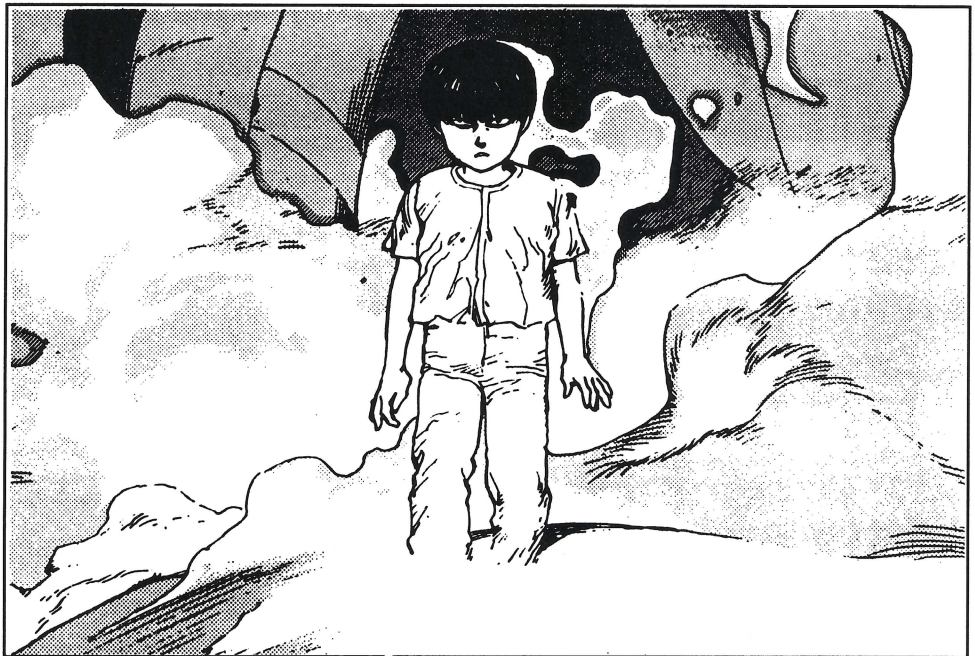
MACEK: I was a scholar for a long time. Actually I was a college librarian, and curator of the Archive of Popular Culture at California State University at Fullerton. One of my jobs was to deal with comic books. So I was very familiar with comics on an academic level. I used to write articles for Pop Culture journals and was

interested in comics as an indicator, a barometer of the texture of a culture. I was never a collector; comics were just disposable entertainment. Then, in the early seventies, I became a comic book retailer.

GREENSPAN: How did that happen?

MACEK: I was teaching college and one of the students and I became friends. When my

audience. Now there are companies like Dark Horse and Eclipse Comics publishing relatively esoteric titles as well as popular titles. It shows that there is a medium there that can be used as a means of expression. I think that's a big change. It has a lot to do with the expansion of the specialty shops, the boutique concept, as opposed to the newsstand



Akira is finally released from his long sleep

position at the University was blue-lined for budgetary purposes, this student, who had his own business selling comic books by mail order and was making more money than the professors, offered me a job. We ended up developing a huge comic book retail business. We had one of the first, probably the first, walk-in comic book stores that sold new comics, old comics, art and portfolios. It was called the American Comic Book Company. That was from 1972 to 1978.

Eventually I left and opened up my own business called Graffiti. I sold that business and became a film consultant. After several years I moved on to open the gallery.

GREENSPAN: What kinds of changes and developments have you seen in the comic book industry? Not only as a market, but from the popular culture point of view as well?

MACEK: When you increase the number of comics being sold each month, the material changes dramatically. It used to be *Superman*, *Spiderman* and related titles, but now we've got *Black Kiss* and *Dirty Pair* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. You can see that there is much more room for diversification of

concept. When I was first selling comic books was when the undergrounds were really big. Well, they were never really big, but....

GREENSPAN: Their heyday, shall we say.

MACEK: Yeah. I find that what's happening now is analogous to the Silver Age of "underground publishers." There's a small group of independent publishers coming out with a lot of non-mainstream material. I think it's good. And I think it's healthy.

GREENSPAN: Have you noticed thematic trends in storyline or art styles in the last four or five years?

MACEK: I wish I could say that I have, but there are just too many comic books for me to read. It seems there may be more violence, more explicit dialogue, more sexual content...storytelling that is more cinematic, more directed towards an intellectual climate. Guys like Howard Chaykin and Frank Miller are producing material that is challenging both intellectually and graphically. I think you can see the influence of these people on younger artists.

Still, comics are primarily popular culture. I think a lot of people don't realize that.

Also, a lot of people seem to think that comics are supreme works of art. But, for the most part, comics are done so fast that a lot of the time it isn't masterwork, it's just work in progress. Popular culture is not meant to be masterwork. If there is art in popular culture, even the most gratuitous, then that's tremendous. Some people examine every line as if it were the work of a great master. I disagree with that concept. This is popular culture, so it's going to be uneven. Some pages will be beautiful, some mediocre, some downright awful. The standards should be different for judging popular culture and fine art.

GREENSPAN: What about Japanese comics? Do you have any special feeling for that aesthetic?

MACEK: Comic books are universal. You should be able to get something out of any comic book you pick up, no matter what language it is in. Still, I think there are many ethnic comics that are produced from every culture. Much of the Japanese manga that has been surfacing in the U.S. is in the universal category. For example, *Nausicaä* clearly transcends its Japanese origins. I think that the traditions of woodblock paintings, which the Japanese were drawing hundreds of years ago, were probably the first "comic books" produced for mass audiences. They've been refining this art for hundreds of years.

GREENSPAN: Most Japanese comics are black and white. Do you have any thoughts on coloring Japanese comic books?

MACEK: In Japan, the norm is black and white. In the U.S. the norm is color. Coloring really helped *Akira* in this market. And, comics look better in color. For example, take *Grey*. The story is very good, there is strong character development, but the story is very complex, especially because of the flashbacks. If you

used color effectively, you could have set up the flashback scenes better. I may be ultra-critical when I read things, but.... I think Viz is now turning to color for the majority of their titles.

GREENSPAN: What about the Eclipse International/Viz Comics publications, or *Lone Wolf and Cub*? Can you envision those in color?

MACEK: Oh, yes. Fight scenes like those found in *Xenon* are always best in color. Color would help clarify the markings on planes in *Area 88*. *Mai* is such a moody book and so nicely rendered, you'd have to be careful. *Kamui*, *Lone Wolf*, hmm, I don't know. That's vintage comic art from Japan; it's really hard to say. Take a book like *Dark Knight*, though. Coloring sold that book. Aesthetic design choices and use of color...that's what comics are about; that's what makes comics. The linework is only the first step. Everything has the potential to look better in color.

GREENSPAN: What do you think about the recent trend toward graphic novels?

MACEK: There are two ways to look at it. If you are thinking about a disposable, inexpensive form of entertainment, then it's comic books. If you are thinking about art, a work that represents a master-thought of an artist or a writer, then the prestige format is a good medium. I certainly don't think that every mini-series should be turned into a graphic novel, just because it's four parts and they can be bound together. If it's a serious work of fiction, then a graphic novel makes sense. I think this trend, too, will flush itself out and only the major works will survive. It's just a marketing strategy, to get yuppies to buy comic books.

GREENSPAN: Another element of the Japanese books is the long, continuous story. What do you think about that?

MACEK: Again, it all depends on the strength of the story. Any serial will have slow spots. In one way, the Japanese weekly serials are more closely related to American comic strips. In the forties, Will Eisner did a little comic magazine that was put in newspapers. It was like a little coverless comic book, but with a



Mai plays with her powers

couple of pages of *Spirit*, couple pages of *Lady Luck*...just like the Japanese weeklies. So Japanese storytelling is closer to comic strip storytelling than to comic book storytelling.

GREENSPAN: That's a very interesting observation. Do you think a book like Eisner's would work in the industry now?

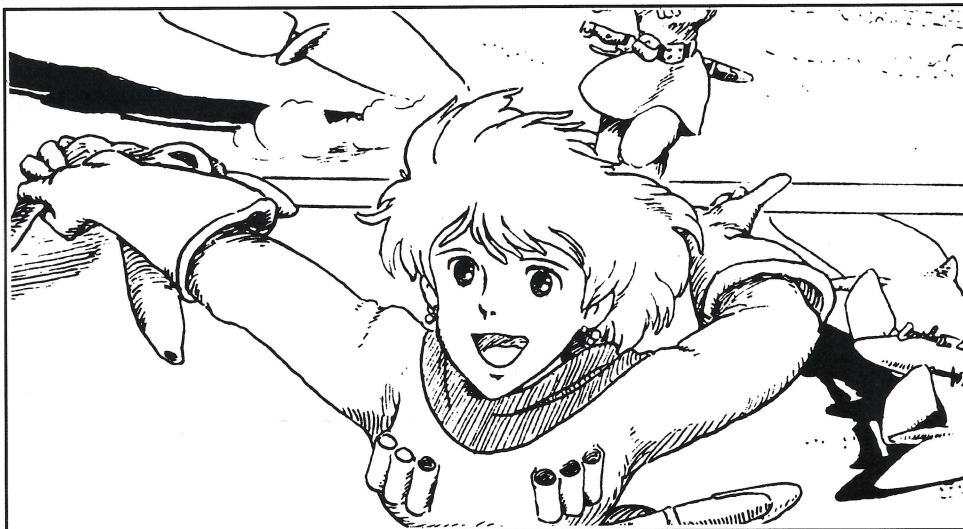
MACEK: Yes, if you were clever enough to package material that would be accessible to the comic strip reading audience. You'd be bucking established trends, but I think there is a market for it.

GREENSPAN: What directions do you see yourself going in the next few years?

MACEK: With Streamline Pictures I hope to refine and enlarge the market for adult-oriented animation projects. I think there is a huge market for these kinds of products that just hasn't been tapped yet. I continue to write and produce original animation as an independent filmmaker. I'm also interested in bringing more foreign animation to the United States, cleaned up and correctly acted so that the philosophy and the dramatic impact is there. Who knows? We'll just have to see. ■

An earlier version of this article originally appeared in *Viz-In*, a publication of Viz Communications, Inc. ANIMAG would like to thank Carl Macek and Seiji Horibuchi for their generous help in arranging for its reprinting.

Nausicaä



Subtitling American-Style

New Companies, Technology Make Subtitled Animation More Accessible Than Ever Before

By Albert Sze-Wei Wang

"What is language if you can't understand it?" a wise man once wrote. Indeed, what is Japanese animation without scripts and subtitles? It can be argued that for as long as there have been anime fans, there have been fans willing to subtitle it.

From the early days of animation fan organizations such as the CF/O-like Earth Defense Command and the Phoenix-based Studio Scorch, individuals with the equipment and know-how have been producing a steady if varying-quality flow of subtitled anime for club meetings and the science fiction convention circuit. Until recently, these scattered and largely disparate organizations have been the main source of subtitled anime.

However, with the entrance of two new companies on the animation scene—the West Coast-based U.S. Renditions and the East Coast-based AnimEigo—fans may finally be able to walk down to their local comic or specialty dealer and buy high-quality subtitled videos for viewing in their own homes.

sion for the purpose of producing high-quality soundtracks and videos for anime series, OAVs and movies at U.S. market prices.

In 1989, U.S. Renditions released English-subtitled versions of two popular OAVs which had both, in their own way, poked playful fun at venerable anime institutions: Gainax's *Gunbuster* (sports drama) and AIC's *Dangaio* (giant robots). At \$34.95 each, both videos have reportedly done well.

"Most liked the packaging and design and found the subtitles literate and easy-to-read above all else," says English script editor Robert Napton. "As the first-ever company to subtitle anime professionally, we opened the door for this kind of product in the marketplace."

AnimEigo made its debut in the American video market early in 1990 with the release of Artmic's *Madox-01*, a 45-minute exercise in futuristic military hardware. One of AnimEigo's founders, Robert Woodhead, had been "minor-league" interested in anime for a number

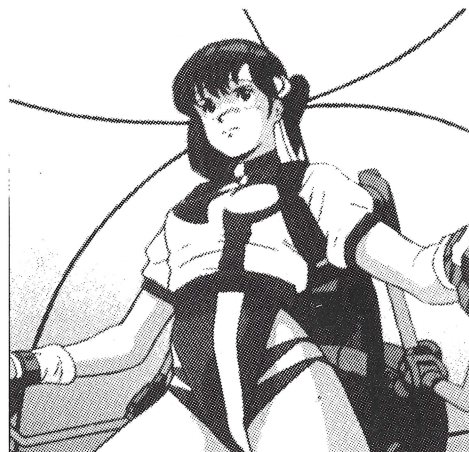
of years, in part due to the frequent trips he had been taking to Japan for his computer game business (Woodhead was involved in the production of the popular fantasy/adventure computer game, *Wizardry*).

Together with Roe Adams, another game designer, the two tested the waters by investing \$50,000 in direct-mail fliers to determine if there was a

commercial market for their product.

"Response, both here and in Japan, has been excellent," Woodhead says. "We are

firmly established in the U.S. fan and comic markets, and are looking to expand into the mainstream rental business. We may need more titles available before this is a viable option, however." AnimEigo's second release, Artmic's 45-minute OAV *Riding Bean*, a high-speed action/adventure, debuted in January of this year and from all signs looks to exceed *Madox* in popularity and sales. Both *Madox* and *Riding Bean* retail for \$39.95.

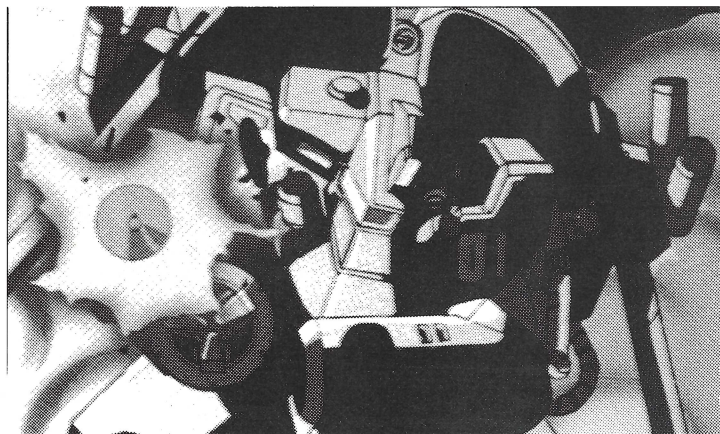


Noriko from *Gunbuster*, US Rendition's first release

Not everyone in the subtitling game has the backing of an established company such as Books Nippan or the resources of Woodhead and Adams. Unlike the early days of subtitling, the easy availability of today's low-cost, professional-quality equipment enables amateurs to put together a product that is virtually indistinguishable from the professionals.

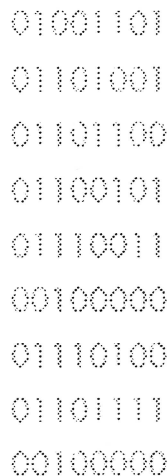
The Ranma Project, named after Rumiko Takahashi's popular comic/television series, is an amateur subtitling group that focuses on television episodes rather than OAVs.

The group's origins date back to a discussion among a small group of friends at a 1989 San Francisco Bay Area science fiction con-



AnimEigo's first attempt at subtitling: *Metal Skin Panic Madox-01*

Books Nippan, a major source of Japanese goods in America for the past fifteen years, created their "U.S. Renditions" divi-



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URUSEI YATSURA OVA—YAGI-SAN O CHESE	\$56.65	● MOTHER	\$95.38	● ANIME RELATED—KINUKO OMORI (PRISS): SWEET DREAMS	\$32.00	● CD SINGLE—DUNBINE	\$10.00
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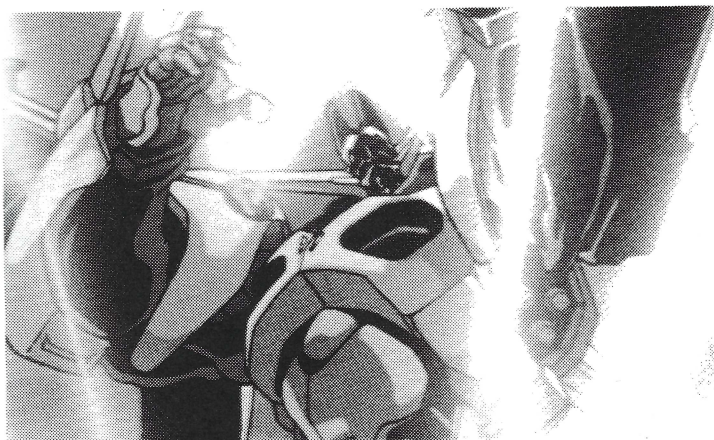
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[illegible]

vention concerning the difficulty in being able to fully appreciate anime without understanding the language.

The first episodes of Takahashi's *Ranma 1/2* were being shown at the convention and left a lasting impact on the group's founder, Robert Gutierrez. Since July of 1989 Gutierrez, who had been graduated with a degree in broadcasting, used his extensive expertise with subtitling equipment and his own financial resources to produce subtitled copies of the shows he loved best: *Ranma 1/2*, *Maison*



From *US Renditions: Dangaio*

Ikkoku, *Urusei Yatsura*, and Gainax's *The Secret of Blue Water*, which only recently completed its first run on Japanese television.

During a showing at the 1990 San Diego Comic Con, *Ranma 1/2* reportedly attracted the single largest anime-oriented audience, even though only two episodes were shown each day. Although most of Gutierrez's works have been shown locally and "in-house" (during meetings of the anime fan club Cal-Animage, based at the University of California, Berkeley), whether or not they will ever receive wider exposure is largely a matter of fan interest—like chain letters, there's no telling how far or how fast they'll spread among notoriously dub-happy anime fans.

Subtitled videos produced "for fun" aren't the problem, says U.S. Renditions' David Riddick. "It's when these videos are sold for profit that it's bad for Nippan, AnimEigo and everyone involved." Because U.S. Renditions and AnimEigo pay for the right to use copyrighted material, both companies have a vested interest in preventing "bootleg" videos because, stated bluntly, fans won't pay "professional" subtitlers for something they can get from other fans for free.

However, Riddick says there are times when fan-subtitled projects can actually help professional subtitlers. "Let's say a group of

fans subtitle for a con. I feel there's nothing wrong with that. In fact, [fan-subtitled anime] may even help because it may turn on a potential fan to Japanese animation."

Woodhead, on the other hand, is more critical of fan subtitling. "Amateur subtitling in the U.S. ranges from awful to excellent," he says. "In most cases, it depends on the amount of hardware that is available to be used. If you're going laser disc through a low-end PC onto VHS tape, the results are going to be watchable, but they aren't professional quality.

"At the high end, amateur groups like The Ranma Project are doing a bang-up job. If they could get higher-quality source materials, you'd need a good VCR and a big TV to see the difference between them and an AnimEigo or U.S. Renditions tape." Woodhead adds that at the heart of every subtitling project is the accuracy of the translation. "If you don't have an accurate transla-

tion, all the technical work in the world isn't going to help you."

Gutierrez believes that U.S. Renditions and AnimEigo are the people for whom anime fans have always hoped. "People who can offer legal, over-the-counter tapes of professionally produced, subtitled anime provide an alternative to asking people for copies of their copies of fan-produced subtitled anime, usually of extremely poor quality obtained from 'bootleggers,' people who take advantage of fan subtitlers like us, who illegally sell pirated copies of our subtitled anime to the unsuspecting public for a profit. U.S. Renditions and AnimEigo provide an outlet in which to get excellent quality tapes, something I could never achieve without the proper rights and investment that really is needed."

On the quality of subtitled anime in America today, Gutierrez believes that they are good in general. "There will always be nitpicking when you want something that's perfect, but the excellent subtitles (in the case of U.S. Renditions) or excellent translation (in the case of AnimEigo) more than make up for any shortcomings that they may have had. Subtitling is not a perfect art, no matter how long you do it, or how many 'standards' are established for it."

People who have been a part of or have seen subtitling projects are aware that subtitling is not a simple matter. Often it is a very tiring, time-consuming and rigorous process. Everything from the translation, to its rewritten English script, to the timing must be coordinated. Why then, would anyone expend so much energy doing it?



Bean

For Napton, it was a desire to broaden the appeal of anime in the United States. "David [Riddick] and I started out running [various fan clubs] years ago to promote the art form. Once we were in a profession that allowed for work in anime videos, we were excited by the chance to create English versions in order to help anime reach Western audiences. In the end, one doesn't mind suffering the rigors of subtitling because of the belief in the art form that one is importing." Napton goes on to add that despite the rigors of subtitling, "the promotion of art is about the only reward."

The reasons were much the same for Woodhead and his partner Adams. "We loved the visuals but didn't speak Japanese, and so we couldn't fully enjoy anime. Plot synopses and translated scripts helped a lot, but they were still unsatisfactory."

For Gutierrez, it was the extremely infrequent availability of subtitled anime and his desire to help people understand what was being said in a show such as *Ranma 1/2* that prompted him to start subtitling.

"In *Ranma 1/2*, most of the jokes in the series were missed completely by the non Japanese-speaking audience. Although the show was visually entertaining, I felt the viewers would enjoy it more if they understood the characters themselves."

But what about their audience? What sort of response to subtitled anime do they expect, not only from fans but from people who have never seen it?

"I think that animation fans will eagerly accept our titles because they are mainly 'active' watchers," says Riddick. "By this I mean they watch foreign animation films that often are not dubbed or subtitled and seek information on these films via *ANIMAG* or *Protoculture Addicts*. They go through a lot of trouble to enjoy their favorite animation."

Riddick believes that non-fans could have two responses to subtitled anime. "'Active' watchers will like it because they can enjoy the subtitles, stories and cultural ambience. The 'passive' watcher will not like them because they are accustomed to being 'spoon-fed' information and don't like to read or deal with foreign concepts and/or cultures. They want to have American anime, which is anime devoid of the charm and aesthetics that make it interesting to the 'active' watcher."

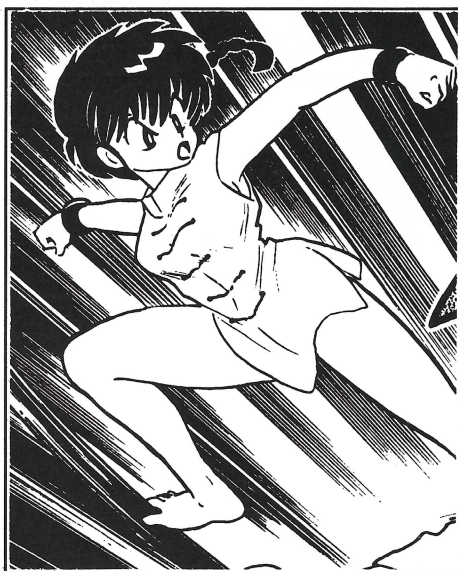
Woodhead, on the other hand, believes that most die-hard fans prefer subtitles because they want to hear the original voice actors and wish to avoid some of the bad dubbing jobs that have come out in the past. He also believes that as the anime fandom grows, there will be a shift in preference from subtitled towards dubbing, especially if AnimEigo is to make it in the mainstream market where dubbing is currently a requirement.

As for Gutierrez, he believes that anime fans will always enjoy subtitled anime. "Even fans who only watch a particular genre in anime

fandom will always be willing to watch something else totally unrelated if it is subtitled. This is good, since they discover other genres of anime they never considered watching because they thought in the past that they could not understand it or didn't care for it."

Gutierrez hopes that people who have never seen anime before will realize that there's animation out there that isn't the "usual 'kiddie cartoons' they have grown up to hate, and that there is somebody who is catering to their now more mature tastes."

When given the opportunity to offer a word of warning or advice to those thinking about subtitled anime, everyone has something to say.



Ranma

Napton suggests not trying to do it solo but to become employed with one of the companies currently subtitled or dubbing. "I think that the emphasis should be on doing officially licensed products. It's simpler to produce fan-created subtitled videos done for promotion or the love of a certain series, OAV, movie, etc., but if they're sold in any way they're illegal and simply wrong."

"I would say to anyone seriously interested in importing anime only one thing: Learn as much Japanese as possible and you can make yourself more valuable to your company. Don't do it if you think it's a get-rich-quick proposition. There's no real power or money in this field."

Woodhead offers a simpler message—"It takes longer, costs more, and is more difficult than you think!"

Gutierrez offers both warning and advice. "It will take up much more of your time than you can comprehend, more than you ever thought. It really takes a lot of determination and dedica-

tion to continue to subtitle week after week. As far as advice is concerned, the old saying 'practice makes perfect' very much applies here. Don't rush yourself to get something done just because you want to be the 'first one on the block' to have the latest-of-whatever subtitled. People will be more impressed with accuracy in both timing and translation than seeing a sloppy job done just for the sake of doing it."

What is it that the people putting in all the hard work hope to see from their efforts?

"We hope our subtitled anime videos promote the art form of Japanese animation," says Riddick simply.

Woodhead says, "Our primary goal in starting AnimEigo wasn't to make a huge amount of money. We all loved anime, and we wanted to make it more accessible to people. In the long run, we want to expand the market to a point where it is as large and diverse as it is in Japan."

Gutierrez, on the other hand, gives a very different perspective. Rather than the packaging, Gutierrez hopes that it'll be the quality of the anime itself that will be noticed. The more mature and "adult" nature of anime is what people want to see on television, Gutierrez says.

"Just look at the success of Fox TV's *The Simpsons*. People are disgusted by the so-called Saturday morning cartoons that still prevail on TV here in the U.S. The Japanese have progressed beyond the simplistic, 'wide-eyed' nature of the previous decade, and have provided their audience with more mature, more meaningful animation, and the U.S. sadly lags behind."

"Hopefully our efforts will convince American producers that this is the next progression of animation style in the U.S., that we're tired of 1/2-hour-long violent kiddie commercials. Regular live-action TV shows have substance and maturity here in the U.S. Why can't animation?"

AnimEigo's most recent work: *Bubble Gum Crisis*



Where to Buy

Titles from both U.S. Renditions and AnimEigo can be found in comic distributors and specialty shops across the country. For mail order purchases, contact:

U.S. Renditions
1123 Dominguez Street, Suite K
Carson, California 90746

AnimEigo
P.O. Box 989
Wilmington, North Carolina 28402

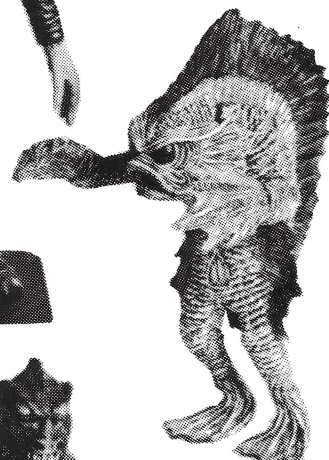
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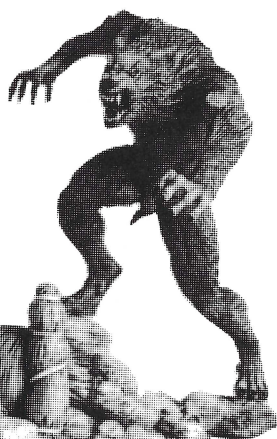
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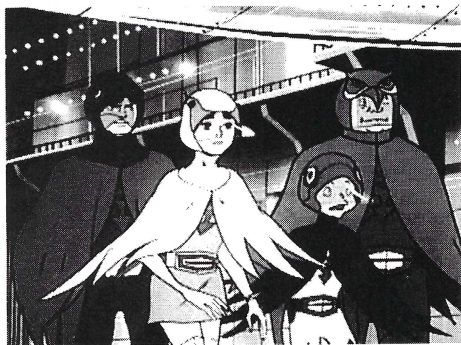
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Science Ninja Team Gatchaman

The Show that Defined the Anime Team

By James Long and Dana Kurtin

American fans often profess an undying love for the shows that first introduced them to Japanese animation. *Astro Boy*, *Speed Racer*, *Star Blazers*, *Robotech*—each possesses a cherished spot in the hearts of American fandom.



And why not? The Japanese series these shows were based on are some of the most beloved ever shown. Japanese fans love them not only for their characters and plots, but because they are landmarks in anime history. Every one of these shows renovated and reformed the animation industry.

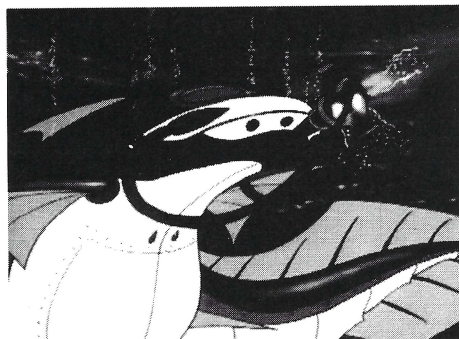
Science Ninja Team Gatchaman is one of those crucial shows, both in America and in Japan. Known in America as *Battle of the Planets*, this innovative series baptized yet another generation of American anime fans. In Japan, *Science Ninja Team Gatchaman* helped redefine the entire action genre—by being a team.

In 1972, most Japanese animation series, as well as most comics, focused on a single protagonist and his exploits. *Gatchaman* focused on five individuals who worked with and against each other, establishing the five classic anime team archetypes: the stern

leader, the sullen second-in-command, the beautiful huntress, the chunky strongman and the cocky young boy. This simple expansion set the pace for later shows, such as *Gundam* with its cast of thousands.

As well as reforming the action genre, *Gatchaman* featured some of anime's most influential character and mecha designers. Yoshitaka Amano, now known for his romantic designs for *Vampire Hunter D* and *Angel's Egg*, designed the faces and forms of many *Gatchaman* characters. Mechanical designer Kunio Okawara first tried his hand at some of *Gatchaman*'s fantastical machines before going on to design mecha for shows such as *Gundam*, *Dougram* and *Xabungle*.

But aside from providing a glimpse of these artists' developing skills, *Science Ninja Team Gatchaman* set a new standard for animation. Its innovations in animation, character design and plot elements estab-



The God Phoenix trapped by a Gallactor war machine

lished a hard-core fandom that exists to this day. In fact, the entire run of *Gatchaman* was recently offered as a laser disc set in Japan for an astronomical \$1,500. Apparently, enough fans responded to make the offer a success.

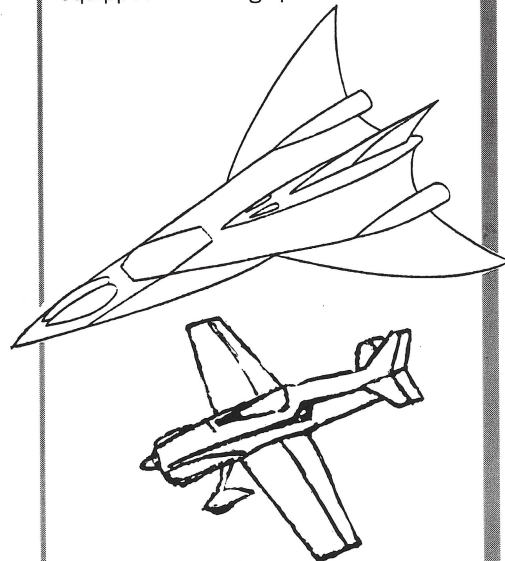
How it Started

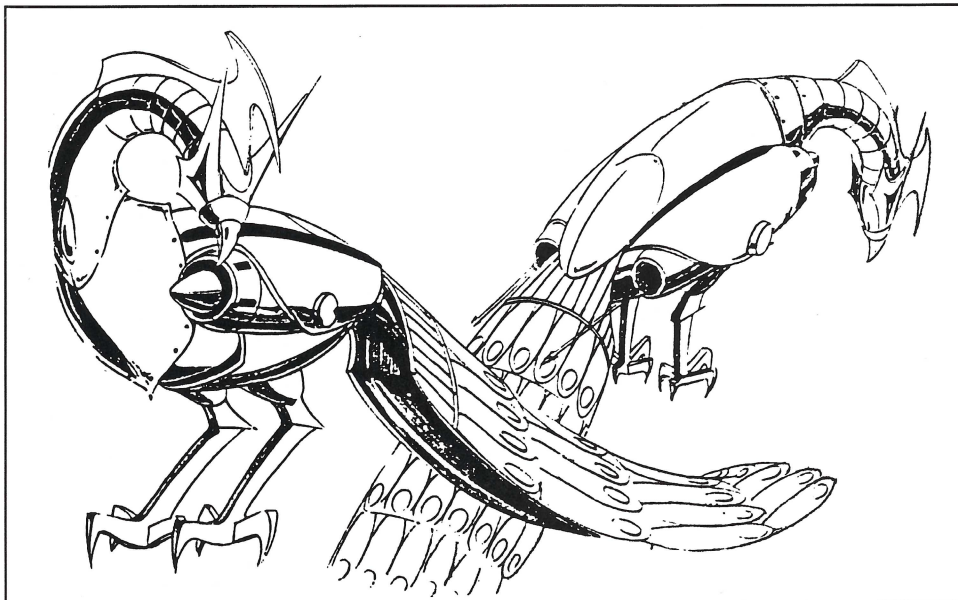
Gatchaman was the brainchild of the late Tatsuo Yoshida, who also created *Mach Go Go Go* (*Speed Racer*) for Tatsunoko Studios. Yoshida abandoned his career as a comic artist to found Tatsunoko in the early '60s with

MECHA FILE

G-1 Ken's Fighter

Ken's plane is normally a single-engine prop plane which he uses to deliver mail to remote islands. When Ken transforms his vehicle, it becomes a small jet fighter that can fly at speeds of up to mach 4. As with all the *Gatchaman* vehicles this fighter was initially unarmed. After Galactor had destroyed the original, a second unit was built but this time equipped with a high-powered laser.





A Gallactor war machine: the Peacock Devil

his two brothers. With Tatsuo as the creative head, the studio established the famous Tatsunoko "look" and began to produce signature animation.

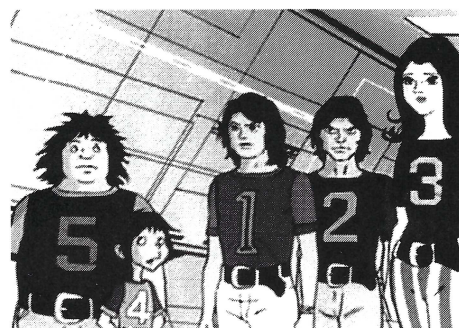
With the success of Tatsunoko's first few series, Yoshida decided to move on to something more advanced. This new show would utilize state-of-the-art animation techniques, featuring careful attention to detail and immaculate production quality.

At first, Yoshida wanted the new series to be the successor to the recently completed *Decision* series, an animated history of military might. "The goal at that point," says early contributor and official plot "planner," Jinzo Toriumi, "was to make the show something of a mechanical-action animation series, rejoicing in flight."

As Yoshida, Toriumi and their fellow planners, Satoshi Suyama and Akiyoshi Sakai, nailed down the most essential elements of their planned series, the basic story ideas behind *Science Ninja Team Gatchaman* began to unfold.

Yoshida wanted a vehicle to explore mankind's confrontation with science. Science itself could not be evil, he reasoned, but only the uses to which it was put. The central conflict of the show evolved around this concept. The evil side would use science only to dominate and enslave, while the opposing "good" side used technology for the betterment of mankind and the world. The series would take advantage of this premise to design ever better and more bizarre machines, devices and plots.

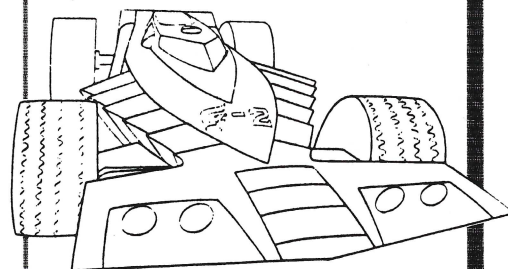
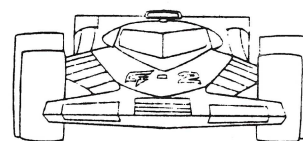
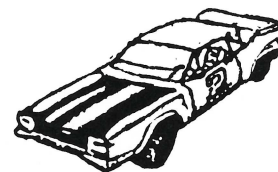
The storyline evolved into a classic tale of good versus evil. The Science Ninja Team was the strikeforce formed by Dr. Nambu of the International Science Organization (ISO) to hunt down Gallactor's mother base. Gallactor, a criminal organization headed by an invading alien force known as Governor X, wanted to conquer the world. A secondary goal was usurping the results of the ISO's main project: a non-pollutant fuel source. In addition to the main conflict, each member of the Science Ninja Team had their own tragic life history and distinctive personality. The leading members of Gallactor had life stories equally as bizarre.



The Gatchaman Team in civilian guise

Hisayuki Toriumi, director of *Gatchaman*, comments on the exhaustive process of creating an entirely new animated show. "Our first problem," he says, "was determining how far into the future the series should be and how many science fiction elements we could use. If the show was too far into the

MECHA FILE



G-2 Joe's Car

Joe has a 2000GT stock car in which he enters races during his free time. When he is called to active duty, though, it changes into a specially-designed racing car capable of driving at 1000 kilometers per hour on good roads. The second version of his car has a large gatling gun housed in the nose.

future the series might be too far removed from reality. So, we finally decided on the year 2001, taken from the major motion picture. That seemed about right for our premise."

But the creative team felt that "futuristic" weapons, such as lasers, were not as visually interesting as the enormous explosions of gunpowder. Toriumi decided the show would spotlight spectacularly destructive explosions and barrages of missiles. "This added an air of realism to the show," Toriumi claims.

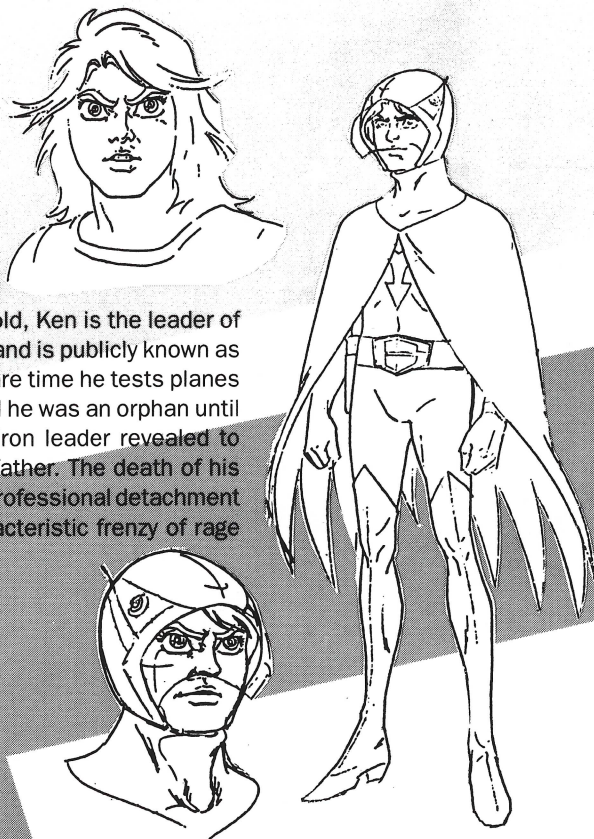
Akira Kozumi, who served as the "science consultant" for *Gatchaman*, reveals that Tatsuo Yoshida and director Toriumi were especially concerned that the machines on the show be technologically feasible. "Yoshida had new ideas for transforming vehicles and wanted me to ensure that these science fiction-style mechanisms weren't handled carelessly," he recalls. "How many times did we discuss the transfor-

The Science Ninja Team Gatchaman

Formed by Dr. Nambu to locate the Gallactor home base, all five of the Science Ninja Team are trained in the techniques of the ninja, along with all the improvements science can provide. They are meant to be only a defensive—never offensive—team, but circumstances sometimes force them into an offensive role. Their costumes are designed to resemble various birds, while their civilian guise is labeled with a number indicating their rank on the team.

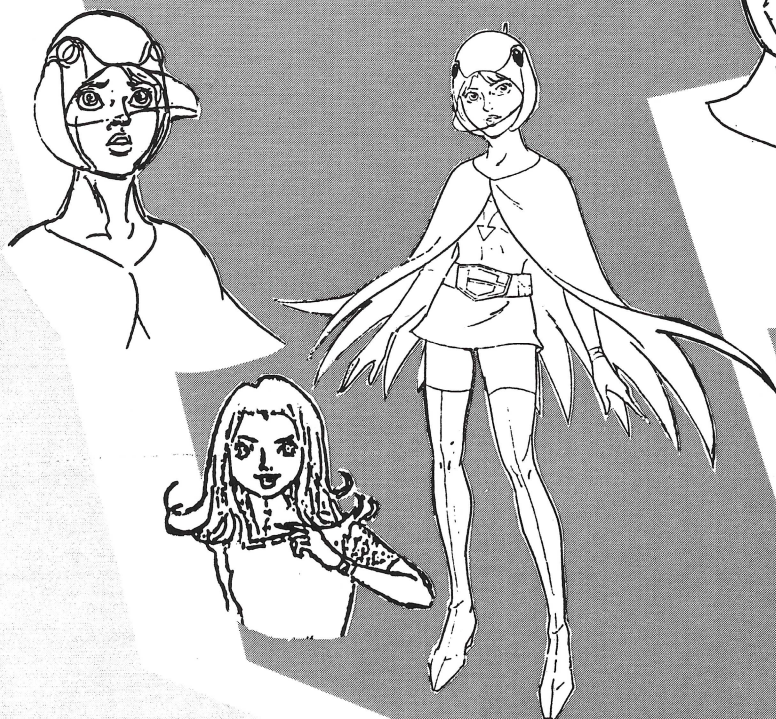
G-1, Ken the Eagle

Although only 18 years old, Ken is the leader of the Science Ninja Team and is publicly known as "Gatchaman." In his spare time he tests planes for the ISO. Ken believed he was an orphan until the Red Impulse Squadron leader revealed to him that he was Ken's father. The death of his father destroyed Ken's professional detachment and sparked an uncharacteristic frenzy of rage against Gallactor.



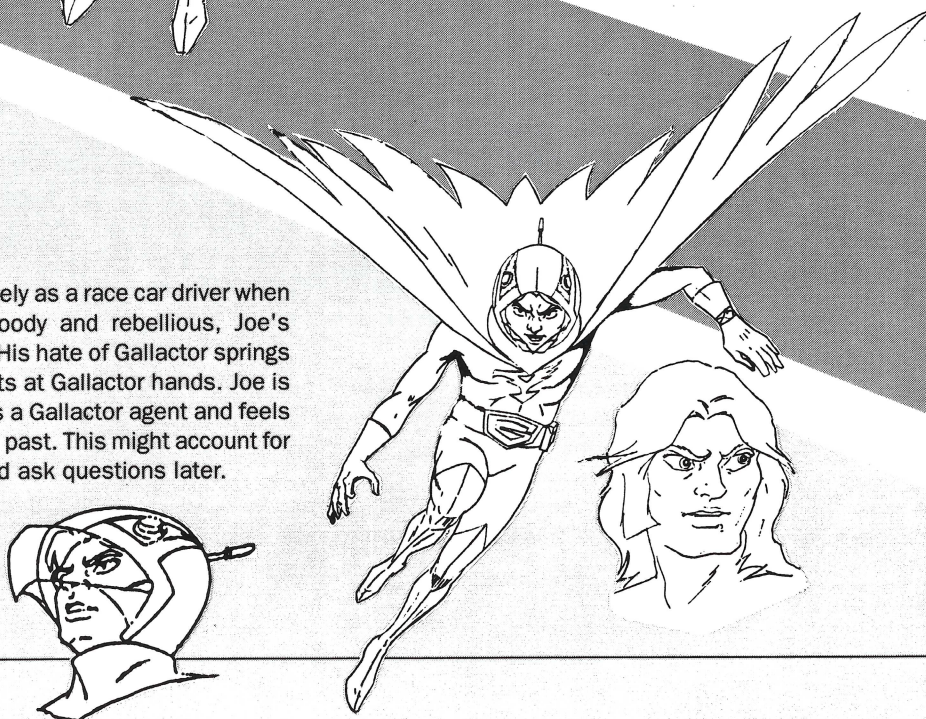
G-3, Jun the Swan

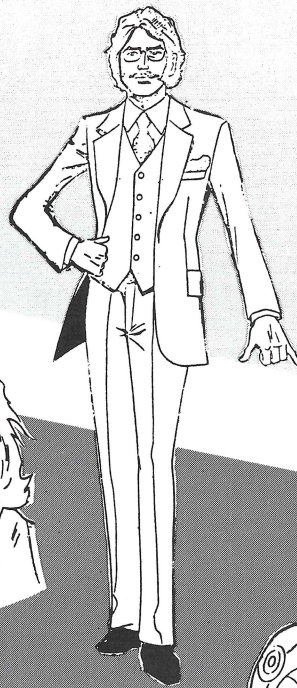
The Science Ninja Team's electronics and explosives expert, Jun is also noted for her powerful kick and her ability to unlock doors with her fingertips. In her off-hours she manages a restaurant/disco called the "Snack-J," although she can barely cook. Jun, like Ken and Joe, is an orphan, although it is known that she is half-American and half-Japanese. Jun found and "adopted" Jinpei and the two treat each other as brother and sister.



G-2, Joe the Condor

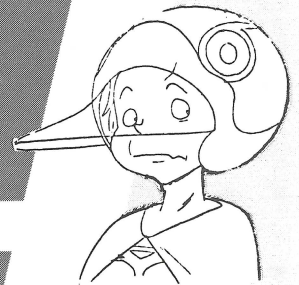
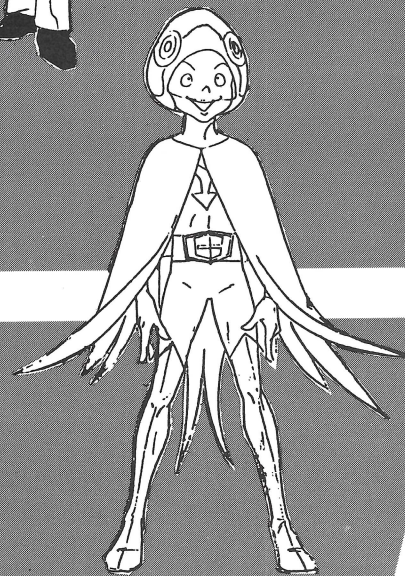
Joe is a top marksman and works privately as a race car driver when not with the Science Ninja Team. Moody and rebellious, Joe's hobbies were once robbery and arson. His hate of Gallactor springs from witnessing the death of his parents at Gallactor hands. Joe is repulsed to discover that his father was a Gallactor agent and feels he has to dispel the taint of his parents' past. This might account for his tendency to shoot missiles first and ask questions later.





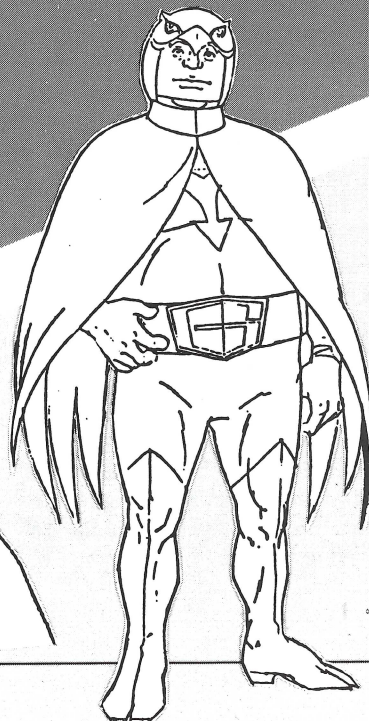
Dr. Nambu

International Science Organization (ISO)'s top scientist, Dr. Kazabuno Nambu is responsible for forming and coordinating the Science Ninja Team as well as the Red Impulse Squadron. Dr. Nambu was among the first to realize the threat posed by Gallactor and the need to mobilize against them.



G-4, Jinpei the Swallow

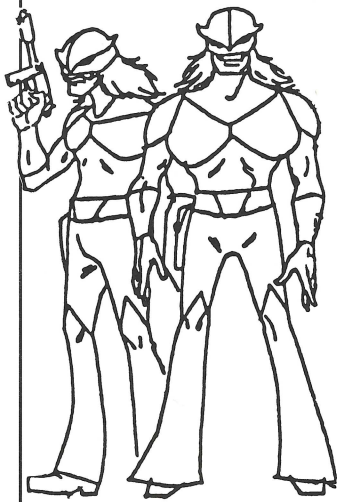
Although Jinpei is only 10 years old and officially the team's mascot, the others treat him as a full member of the team. Jinpei is always bright, inquisitive, and full of dreadful puns. His ingenuity often helps to defeat the newest Gallactor menace, although his attempts to bring home animals (seals, beetles, whales) sometimes get him in trouble. It is speculated that Jinpei is the abandoned orphan son of the leader of the Jupiter Ninja army.



G-5, Ryu the Owl

The 17-year-old Ryu pilots the Science Ninja Team's command ship, the *God Phoenix*, and manages a yacht harbor when not on duty. Ryu's lack of education is compensated by his sweet nature and easily roused sense of chivalry. His massive strength is backed by his skill with an air gun, although he usually mans the ship while the other team members fight. Unlike the others, Ryu is not an orphan and is deeply protective of his family.





Gallactor

An organization of villains dedicated to world conquest and under the control of Governor X, Gallactor has secret bases around the world and secret agents in every government.

Berg Katse

Originally a pair of male and female twins, Berg Katse is the hermaphroditic, totally ruthless commander for the Gallactor forces. A mutant created by Governor X, Katse has an IQ of 280 but is completely unable to stabilize his sex, which uncontrollably fluctuates between male and female. Once he learns to control his form, Katse sometimes takes on his female personage to work for Gallactor undetected. Defeating the Science Ninja Team is almost an obsession with Katse, and he is willing to sacrifice many Gallactor agents to do it.



Governor X

The true power behind Gallactor, Governor X is actually an alien computer from the Selector star in the Andromeda Nebula. He founded Gallactor to conquer Earth for his homeworld. Since Governor X does not have a humanoid shape, he created Berg Katse to do his evil work for him.

mation scenes of the Science Ninja Team's individual vehicles...? Every new idea required a new vehicle description, which of course affected the entire look of the show.

"On the point of conforming with known science, I really had a problem with the transforming machines. That's just beyond the level of science in the series!" He continues wryly, "We finally came up with the idea that Dr. Nambu had been given the technique by friendly aliens who disliked Gallactor. This never actually came out in the series, but I still think it worked."

The show was an immediate success from its premiere on Japanese television in October of 1972. A great deal of the show's popularity derived from its technically advanced animation and unique designs. The animation in contemporary shows, such as *Mazinger Z* and *Devilman*, simply could not compete with the results of the money and care Tatsunoko lavished on *Gatchaman's* animation.

Despite this attention to detail, mistakes did creep in. Toriumi commented, "It's always best to create a show without any contradictions, but if it gets too logical, it can end up being boring. A number of problems can be solved by 'flashiness' and a speedy tempo. We were certain that that the contradictions would show up, but in the end, the fast pace of the series covered up a lot of mistakes."

Sharp-eyed viewers noted the show's visual anomalies; just one example is the mass-defying stunt performed by a machine made entirely out of cars, whose enormous legs were once ordinary car tires.

"A lot of the material was scientifically inaccurate," Akira Kozumi admits cheerfully. "But even in the beginning Tatsunoko compensated for those mistakes by their highly developed animation skills."

As the audience grew, *Gatchaman's* original run of 53 episodes swelled into 105 episodes and a second year. Toriumi commented, "We didn't expect the series to last so long. At first we planned to end the series with the grand 'Van Allen Belt' storyline [in which Gallactor tries to destroy the radiation band around the Earth and pelt the Earth with radiation], and Ken's goodbye to his father. Then we tallied up the storylines and realized that we could do a second season."

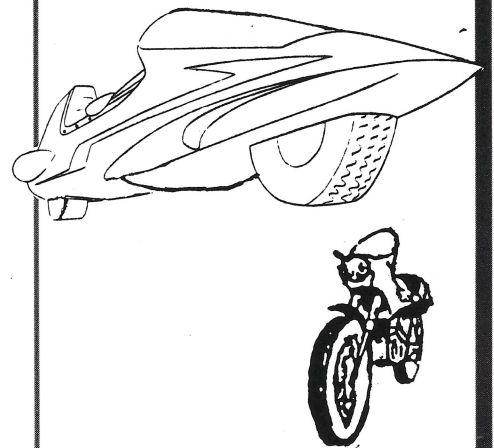
"When we started, we hadn't really considered how a Gallactor became inaugurated, or about Katse Berg's past, or how Ken and Dr. Nambu formed the Science Ninja Team... We just started with the simple formula of the conflict between *Gatchaman* and Gallactor. We never did explain everything."

"But now we could divert from the original plans. Although we usually told lengthy stories, we could now spotlight the individual characters and create their pasts."

MECHA FILE

G-3 Jun's Motorcycle

This motorcycle resembles a contemporary 700cc-class street bike that Jun uses as standard transport for everyday chores. Upon transformation it becomes a long, sleek, aerodynamic two-wheeled "Sonic Car." In this mode it can travel at 700 km/h on land. Two small skis lower from the chassis, allowing it to traverse water or snow at speeds of up to 200 km/h. The second Sonic Car has a heavy rocket launcher mounted on each side of the main body.

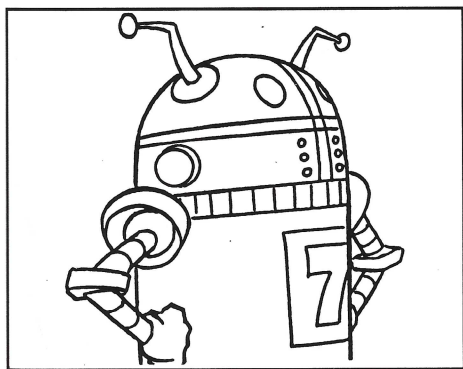




Violence judged too graphic for American television

Even after *Gatchaman* went off the air in 1974 the fans refused to be sated. Finally, the *Gatchaman* movie was released in July of 1978. While it was only a compilation of important scenes from the original show, it set the stage for the *Science Ninja Team Gatchaman*'s return in a new television series titled *Gatchaman II*.

Unfortunately, many fans felt that the sequel never quite measured up to the origi-



7-Zark-7

nal. While the character designs remained the same (with the presumably deceased Joe returning as a cyborg), the quality of the animation decreased. Occasionally, footage from the original show was crudely spliced into the new show to save money. Fans who had expected another ground-breaking series were disappointed by what they considered an inferior imitation. But ratings for the new show rivalled those for the original *Gatchaman*,

heralding the third *Gatchaman* attempt, *Science Ninja Team Gatchaman Fighter*, in the early 80's. Dismissed by some fans as a shameless marketing ploy, *Gatchaman Fighter* lacked the consistently high animation quality of the original *Gatchaman*, and lasted for only 48 episodes.

The American Version

While *Gatchaman II* raided the airwaves in Japan, the New York-based company Sandy Frank Film Syndication quietly bought the original show's worldwide distribution rights, perhaps hoping to cash in on the current *Star Wars* craze with a science fiction show aimed at children.

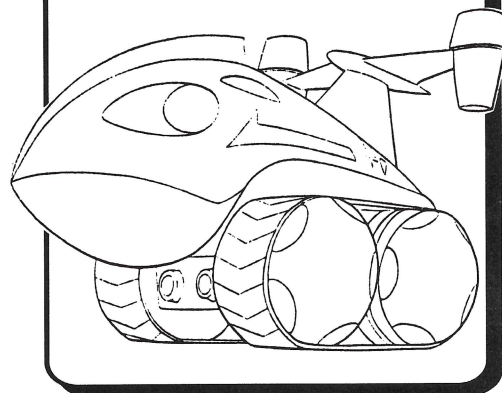
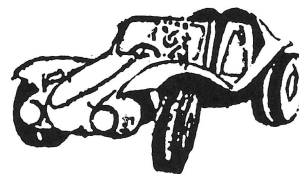
But *Gatchaman*'s original condition wasn't quite acceptable to American television standards. For one thing, the explosions Toriumi was so proud of were too violent, and a lot of battle footage had to be cut. Every episode was edited and given additional animation to make each episode a story in itself instead of following the original continuing storyline. In one case, the episode was edited so extensively that only ten to twelve minutes of the original half-hour episode were left intact. In the end, only 85 of the original 105 episodes were used for what the syndication company titled *Battle of the Planets*.

The American additions to the show included changing the setting from the planet Earth to many planets around the galaxy to give the show a more "intergalactic" feel. A cute robot similar to *Star Wars*' R2-D2, "7-Zark-7," was introduced to explain the action in the

MECHA FILE

G-4 Jinpei's Helicobuggy

Due to a special license issued by the I.S.O., Jinpei can legally drive his dune buggy. Much like the other *Gatchaman* vehicles, his too undergoes an impressive transformation. The Helicobuggy is a small, self-contained V-TOL rocket-assisted tank. It is the slowest of the *Gatchaman* vehicles, capable of a maximum speed of only 200 km/h, but it is also the most versatile. It travels by land utilizing its caterpillar treads and uses the rockets to fly or propel it under water. The primary access hatch stores a wide variety of equipment. A periscope, buzzsaw, net and laser have all been deployed via this mouth-like opening at the nose of the vehicle. The second Helicobuggy came armed with a payload of bombs that Jinpei drops on the Galactor forces when necessary.



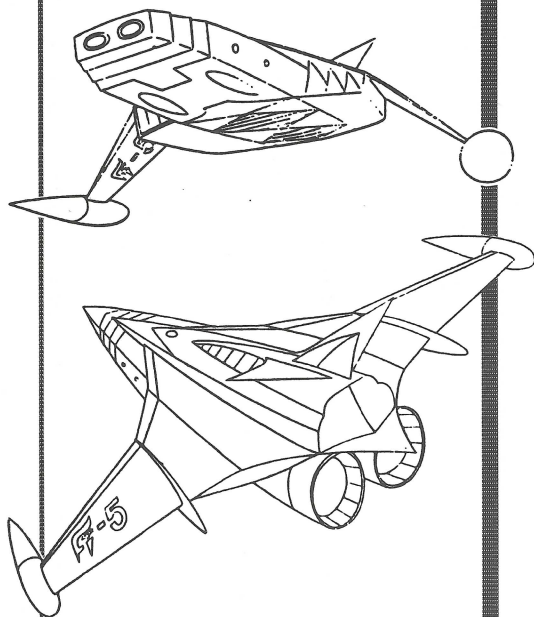
freshly edited series and to give the show continuity.

The storyline was simplified to be accessible to the American children's market. The *Science Ninja Team* was renamed "G-Force." The force of good on the planet, the International Science Organization (ISO), was transformed into the Intergalactic Federation. And the evil side, the one who had originally used Earth's technology to destroy, was turned into an alien menace controlling an army of androids.

MECHA FILE

G-5 Ryu's Hovercraft

This is the only Science Ninja Team vehicle that has no civilian mode. It serves to store the all other vehicles when the team is called to active duty. The G-5 is the main body of the team's command ship, the *God Phoenix*. Its jet engines provide sufficient thrust to allow travel at mach 5. The G-5 can also dive under water and function as a submarine at depths as extreme as 2,000 meters. Although it carries the team's primary offensive weapons, the Bird Missiles, they cannot be fired unless all five vehicles are united. For this reason, the G-5's primary attack is to ram the enemy.



God Phoenix

This is the main vehicle of the Science Ninja Team. When the G-1 through G-4 unite with the G-5, the hovercraft's cockpit becomes the control room for the whole team. The collective five vehicles are called the *God Phoenix*. In addition to the G-5's abilities, it can also use the Astro Jet Engines to achieve low-orbital flights around the Earth. This is only done sparingly due to the tremendous pressures placed on the team members during such flights. With the four smaller vehicles docked, the *God Phoenix* can fire the Bird Missiles or initiate the Science Ninja Firebird Techniques. The second version carried two upgraded Super Bird Missiles.

Despite these changes, the spark that had made the original show so captivating survived to ensnare a whole new generation of American anime fans. Many fans claim that the show sparked their interest in seeing more anime, much as *Speed Racer*, *Star Blazers* and *Robotech* inspired their own generations of fans.

"The series seemed new and innovative compared to American cartoons," says one fan. "The quality of animation, compared to other shows on at the time, was simply impressive."

Hoping to tap into a new, fresh core of fans, a reedited American version titled *G-Force* aired briefly on cable television in 1986. Unfortunately, the remake was burdened with stilted

dialogue and voice-acting and was not a success. It is currently available for syndication.

In both Japan and in America, *Gatchaman* was at the forefront of an animation renaissance. It opened doors for future series, not only with its advanced animation techniques, but with its storytelling devices and strongly depicted characters. It created expectations of even better things to come—both for the industry and for its audience. In Japan, *Gatchaman* set a new standard in animation and opened the door for shows with ever-increasing casts and complexity of plot. As for America, *Science Ninja Team Gatchaman* opened the door for an entirely new generation of fans who had never heard of this thing called "anime." ■

The Death of Joe

At least part of *Gatchaman's* success must be attributed to the spectacular and tragic death of Joe the Condor. Joe, rebellious, surly, and intense, was possibly the most popular character in the series and his dramatic, drawn-out demise drew hundreds of fascinated fans hanging on his every dying breath.

Joe's illness was slowly developed in the last episodes of the second season. The epitome of strong, silent masculinity, Joe hid the fact that direct light would set off attacks of dizziness and blurred double vision. Since his disorientation caused him to miss targets, the other team members could only assume that Joe had gone soft on Gallactor. But in fact, Joe was afraid that if he admitted his disability he'd be forced to leave the team.

The team suspects that something is terribly wrong with Joe, and finally Dr. Nambu learns of Joe's illness. After collapsing into unconsciousness in the street, Joe awakens to overhear a doctor telling Nambu that a supposedly benign injury from Joe's early days on the Science Ninja Team is suddenly deadly. Shrapnel embedded in his brain is impairing bodily functions and he only has a week, ten days at most, to live.

Joe decides that if he is going to die he will take Gallactor down with him. Finally, he discovers the Gallactor home base, Cross Karakorum. Unable to communicate with the other team members, Joe fights valiantly and destroys an entire legion of Gallactors single-

handedly. Left wounded and unconscious, Joe is dragged into the base. When he does not awaken from his coma, Katse Berg orders the administration of a new experimental drug. "This will make him feel better," sniggers a Gallactor doctor. "Too bad it will kill him."

Awake, Joe tries to kill Katse when he hears of Gallactor's latest scheme, the Black Hole Operation. But when his feather shuriken goes awry, the Gallactors open fire. When he hears that the Science Ninja Team has arrived, Joe hazily realizes that he cannot allow himself to die just yet because only he can help the team find the entrance to the secret base. With his remaining strength he drags himself to the entrance and contacts the team.

The Science Ninja Team refuses to believe that Joe will die. Ken gives Joe his boomerang, telling him that "this is our hearts." Battle cuts the scene short, and when it is



over, the earth has been torn away from the secret Gallactor base. Only Ken's boomerang remains where Joe once lay.

Joe's body is never recovered. ■

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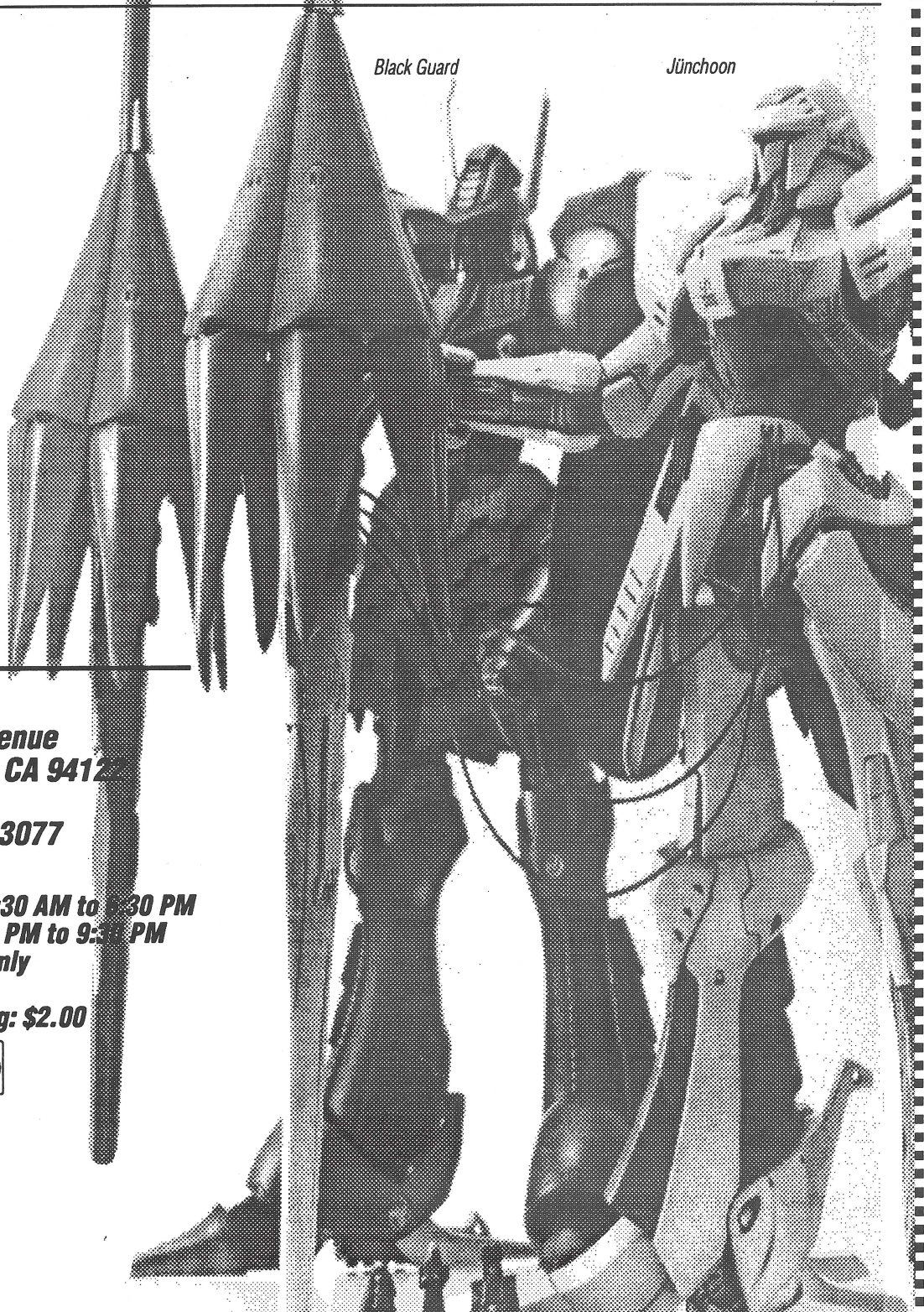
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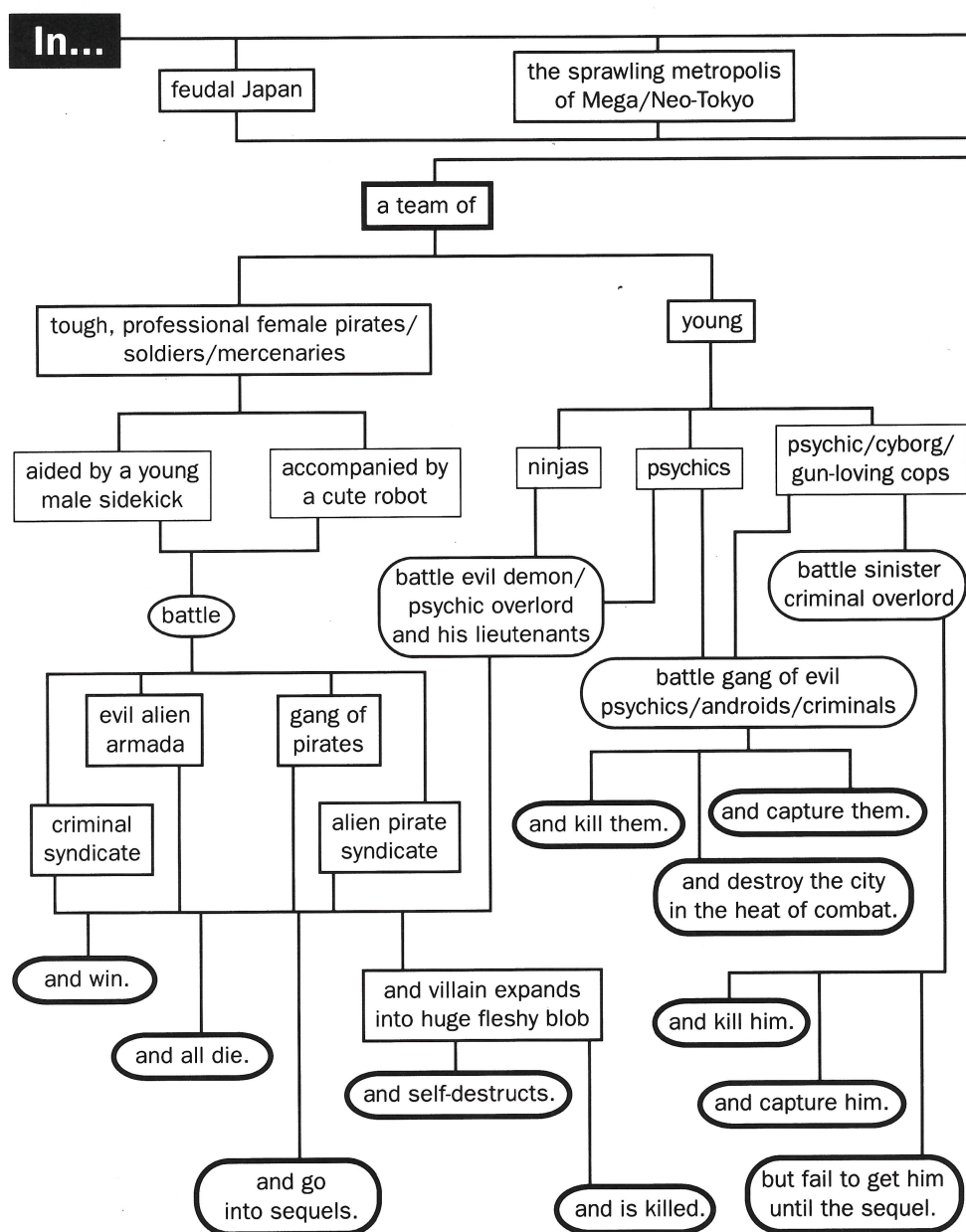
ANIME JA NAI

By Mark Simmons

Why let Gainax, Bandai and Toshiba EMI have all the fun? Plot your own OAV the fast & easy way!

So you've always suspected that *Megazone 23* and *Metal Skin Panic Madox-01* are virtually the same story. You've already noticed that *Bubblegum Crisis'* Knight Sabers and the female pirates of *Sol Bianca* have more in common than the presence of a pre-pubescent male mascot. But what about *Project A-ko* and *Fight! Iczer-1*? Even Original Anime Video productions with widely different styles generally draw from a handful of basic story elements.

With this in mind, we now present an all-purpose plot flowchart enabling you to construct a professional-quality storyline suitable for a thirty- or sixty-minute video—or even a series or movie if you play your cards right. Just follow the chart, spice the result up with a couple of reliable gimmicks—romance, motorbikes, the ever-popular weapon of ultimate destruction or a kidnapped little girl with awesome powers—and all that separates you from Kenichi Sonoda is a few million yen in studio financing. Bon appétit!



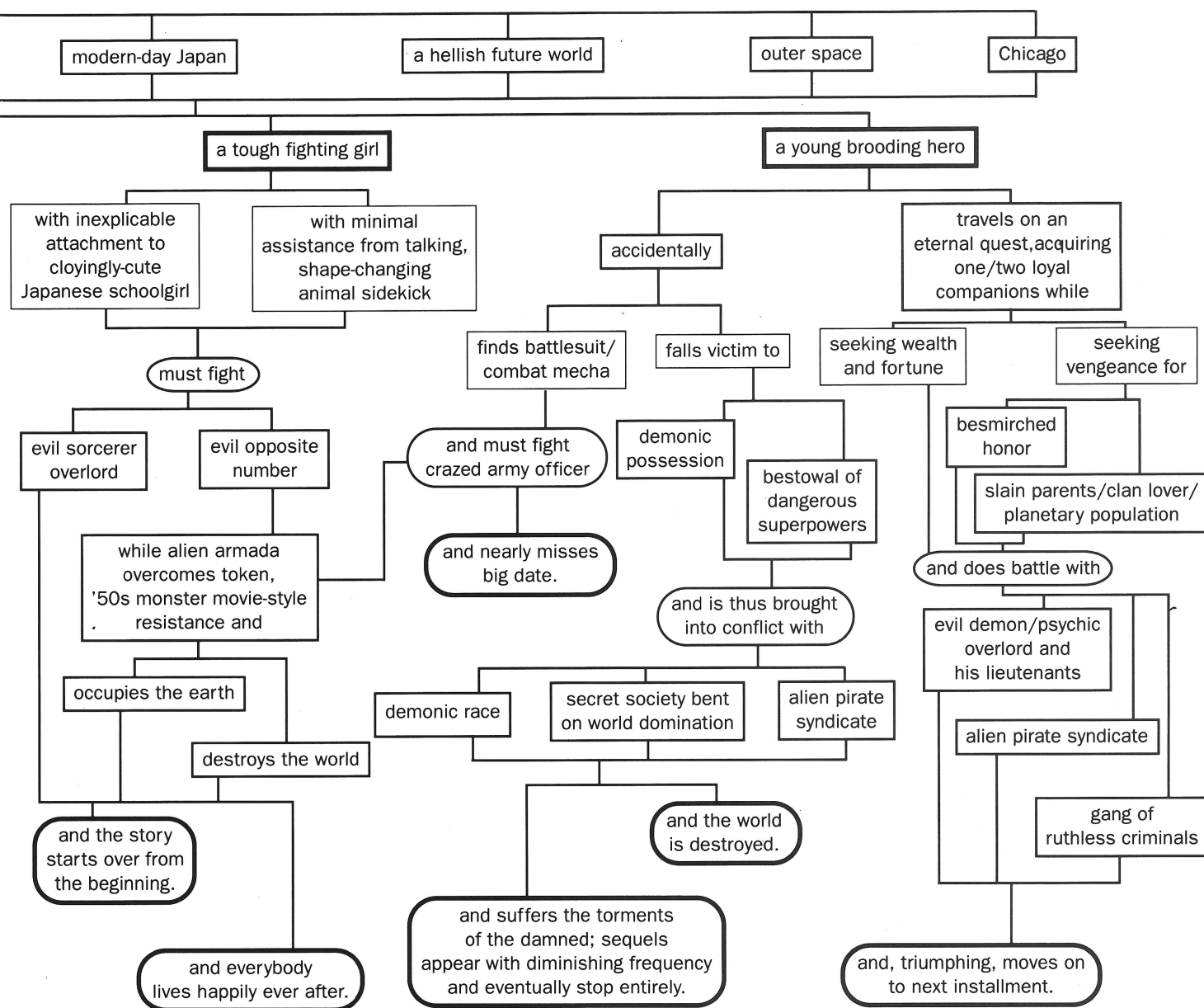
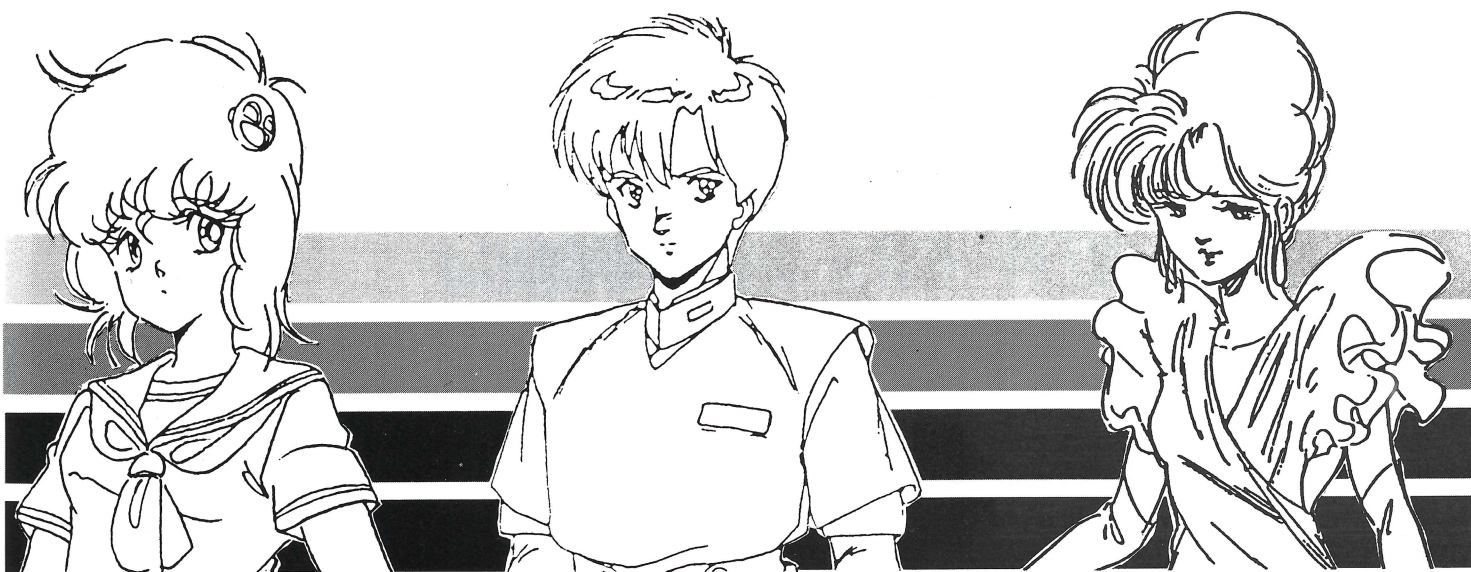


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ANIMATION: WHAT'S NEXT?

By Michael Kurcfeld¹

First of a Two-Part Article

It used to be that cartoons, like sex and skating, worked best when you didn't think about them too much. But the art of animation has a lot on its mind these days, and it's worth looking beyond the hype about another Golden Age to see how the medium is being stretched. Most animators acknowledge that booms come in feast-and-famine cycles dictated by a fickle public. And like rock, animation is wild at heart, but glutted with retreads, play-it-safe execs and more technique than art. Most of what comes in the wake of Bart Simpson and Roger Rabbit will probably be derivative, mercenary goop. But fresh visions are perennial, and beyond Saturday morning's puerile hackwork—and all the superb Disney craft that goes into warhorse material—there persists that hypothetical grownup cartoon that can win an Oscar for best picture, or change people's lives.

The success of *The Simpsons*, which some animators refer to as "illustrated radio" because of the superiority of its scripts to its animation, has proven once again (Rocky & Bullwinkle got there first) that writing can be the true animating force behind a cartoon. Ironically, until now writing has been thought of as merely the cheapest way to get the story across—it's easier to crank out exposition than action—and therefore at the root of TV animation's mediocrity. But it may end up leading to an overall maturation of the medium, as more serious writers are lured in to conjure better stories. Dennis Klein, who wrote much of *Buffalo Bill* and *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman*, is supplying scripts for *Family Dog*—which began life as an *Amazing Stories* episode created by Brad Bird and Tim Burton. The characters, a contemporary American household seen through the eyes of its shlemiel pooch, will presumably get the kind of quirkiness and ring-of-truth dialogue that leads to

Japan is often assumed to be the world's leader in animation but that doesn't mean they're the only game in town. Industry analyst Michael Kurcfeld lets us in on some recent trends and developments on a international scale

something like the audience's own lives.

The only transcendent moment of the 1990 Emmy Awards was when egg-yolk-colored Lisa Simpson exhorted the assembled glitterati to applaud in favor of abandoning the whole idea of peer competition. It was a sly gag that for one magic moment made a lot of people squirm. Goosing the system is what cartoons used to do in the rowdy heydays of Max Fleischer, Warner Bros. and MGM, but there's some evidence that we'll see more of it in the '90s. While comic relief has always been a priority, it could get a lot darker.

A New Era

In 1969, Ralph Bakshi released *Fritz the Cat* and broke out of the ghetto of kidstuff with an unabashedly X-ratable romp on the lowlife fringe. He followed with *Heavy Traffic*, an even grittier, autobiographical excursion through urban underbelly and psychological grotto. It promised a new era of adult animation that never arrived, unless you count Don Bluth's *An American Tail*, which at least tried to move into the anti-Semitism terrain of Art Spiegelman's *Maus*. But audiences are getting hipper. Not only have they bought Bart's antic pseudo-cynicism wholesale, they're attending animation jamborees like the International Tournée and Spike & Mike Festival (which is now producing independent projects) in record numbers. They've had a decade's diet of MTV, which has probably done more for maverick animation than anybody else in terms of mass showcase of global work. They may now want something a bit more saturnine than *The Little Mermaid*.

Somewhere there waits a generation of disgruntled young animators who see the same possibilities as the artists and writers who turned comix into graphic novels with subtlety and edge—a lot of it given to the

indulgent moodiness, personal demons and morally ambivalent characters so prized by the angst-and-redemption crowd. Probably the best-known example of this transcendental pulp was Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*, which gave us a wittily updated Batman,



The new Saturday morning Mighty Mouse

both tormented and urbanely art-directed. Marinating cartoons with such literary pretensions would come a lot closer to satisfying adult tastes than the usual toy-clone characters and facile feel-good morality tales. The most daring animation will defy the cult of Cute, and replace cuddly critters with bêtes noires. Though embryonic, there are signs of its approach, most of them abroad but a few in the U.S.

Take Wesley Archer, who studied under veteran experimentalist Jules Engel at CalArts, and now works at Klasky-Csupo (they animate *The Simpsons*). His *Jac Mac and Radboy Go!*, based on a story in the underground comic *Weirdo*, takes you on a joyride to hell (literally) with a couple of remorseless teen boozers who look like Hunter Thompson acolytes and sound like Jack Nicholson on helium. Done in prismacolor on frosted cel, in a lurid style that

looks like George Grosz doing a service spot for AA, *Jac Mac* has more raw energy than plutonium. It's the kind of cartoon that makes righteous folk cringe, and such kooky subversion has been too long absent from this sector of pop culture. It was last seen in the recent *Mighty Mouse* series, a ravishingly offbeat revamp not coincidentally produced by Bakshi, and spearheaded by John Kricfalusi.

Kricfalusi now runs Spumco, a madhouse cartoon studio full of grateful refugees from Disney and other enchantment factories. Permanently twisted by early exposure to *Mad Magazine's* Don Martin and Basil Wolverton, Kricfalusi revels in rabid parody. His *Mighty Mouse* took on everyone from Batman to Alvin and the Chipmunks. Now, with a show called *Ren Hoek and Stimpy*, he's helping MTV's Nickelodeon try to restore children's cartoons to what they were circa Tex Avery: micro-masterpieces with enough levels of absurdity so that anybody could enjoy them. With a cat-and-dog duo (Ren Hoek is a cross between Peter Lorre and an asthma-hound chihuahua) who seem to be victims of botched lobotomies, Kricfalusi takes the conventions of cartoon gagfest—squash-and-stretch, symmetrical mayhem—and exaggerates them to the point where levity turns arch, even bizarre. It may be the closest thing to black comedy ever masquerading as kidvid.

Another outfit that believes in animation with itchy teeth is International Rocketship Limited in Vancouver. Fearless leader Marv Newland not only nurtures lone wolves from all over, he spools out his own loopy cartoons.



Gen from *Barefoot Gen*

Sing Beast Sing features a sax-playing poodle, a stone-drunk beagle in sneakers, and a gravel-voiced mostly human blues pianist named Toledo, who's green and has an octopus tentacle for a right arm. The cel technique is classic and full, but it's all done in a minor-key, off-the-wall way that has to be a put on, only you're not sure how. Danny Antonucci, a

Rocketship regular, made a Grand Guignol gem called *Lupo the Butcher*, which inspires vegetarianism in most people who see it. Lupo is a glowering Bronx-Italian prole who, in the course of cleaving meat, ends up cleaved—a vehement head that just keeps on spouting obscenities as if nothing has happened. Intentional or not, *Lupo* takes cartoon's carica-



"Presence" from *Robot Carnival*

turist urge to a surreal extreme, making an otherwise offensive stereotype (that is, offensive for being a stereotype) so wincingly ridiculous it's neutralized.

Comics and Animation—The Japanese Connection

The first graphic novel to make the leap into animation may be *The Airtight Garage*, by the Parisian cult heavy Jean Giraud (a.k.a. Moebius). *Garage* is an intergalactic sendup of the great-white-explorer genre, loosely spun into tongue in cheek soap opera in which the storyline plays hard to get. It features Major Grubert (imagine Major Dudley Do-Right done by Edward Gorey) and Malvina ("sexual sorceress deluxe" and girlfriend) moving in and out of a constant improv of luxuriant sci-fi detail. More than the lattice of plot setups and space-voodoo dialogue, what makes Moebius' book so irresistible is his stately, unerring draftsmanship, which is almost too honed to hold so eccentric a yarn. Moebius has completed storyboards for the film adaptation and is negotiating with Soyuzmultfilm to animate. If that falls

through—his agent says the Moscow studio is admirable overall but plodding in its styling of characters—he will team with a Japanese company.

This would make a lot of sense. Comics and animation are much more intimately linked in Japan, where cruder graphic novels are routinely read by salarymen on subways, and feature-length cartoons are considered a viable part of mainstream cinema (they release five times the number we do). To Japanese filmmakers, animation provides a cheap source of special effects and a medium elastic enough to push the limits of graphic storytelling. It's true the Japanese mass audience worships Cute, the most common character being a pubescent girl with Keane eyes and a tendency to save the world from destruction when she's not agonizing over Right-san. But they aren't afraid of *kurai*, or darkness. The single most disturbing bit of animation I've ever seen is the sequence in Keiji Nakazawa's *Barefoot Gen* that vividly depicts the immediate aftermath of the Hiroshima bombing.

There are two areas—three if you count porno—that have evolved into staple sources of adult entertainment leaning toward art: science fiction and noir. Occasionally, all three blur into one. The fact that there's a vast and growing American network plugged into this stuff—via rental clubs, magazines and conventions—would suggest that it's satisfying something our animation isn't.

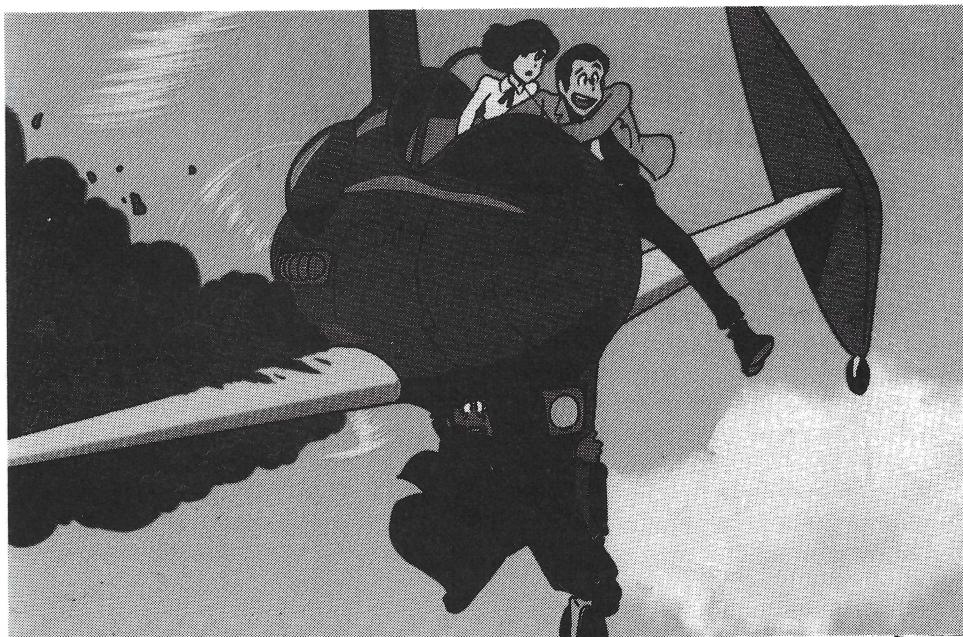


Kaneda from *Akira*

Katsuhiro Otomo's *Akira*, which got pretty good box office in the U.S., is set in post-WWII Neo-Tokyo and revolves around a young motorcycle gang member who somehow taps into a terrifying supernatural force. What made *Akira* break the foreign market barrier was its

fastidious realism—art direction on a par with classic Disney—as well as spectacular action sequences and hallucinatory intensity. It's far more than a teen flick with hardware, and not just because of the near-rape and bar scenes. While it breaks all kinds of technical ground—with state-of-the-art computer systems used in sound and photography—*Akira* also manages to bring together themes as diverse as

Delivery Service, about a witch's coming of age, is set in a European village that straddles this and last century. Apart from the fact that *Kiki* was the largest grossing domestic Japanese film of 1989, Miyazaki is a passionately engaged artist who is angered by what he still sees as the mediocrity of most Japanese animation, and by the creeping fascism in his country. By combining unsentimental fantasy



Lupin Clarisse and Zenigata escape from Castle Cagliostro

tested friendship and parapsychology, in moments that compete with a live-action film like *Altered States*. Distilled from a hugely successful manga serial also published in the U.S. by Marvel, the storyline is often indecipherable, but the lad's paroxysmal fever-dream alone is worth a ticket. The combination of calibrated visual impact and groping sci-fi epistemology rarely if ever gets seen in American animation. Due to canny Japanese direction, *Akira* was done for \$7 million in a country not known for bargains.

"Japanese animation is growing up," says Carl Macek, a producer at Streamline Pictures, which distributes the best of it in the U.S. "It's analogous to the '30s, when you had a bunch of B-movies being made by people like William Wyler until they let him make classics like *Wuthering Heights*. We're now into the Silver Age of Japanese animation, the second wave. They've learned the techniques and the storytelling, now they're broadening it into universal areas that aren't ethnocentric."

To break out of the Japanese frame, Hayao Miyazaki, arguably Japan's leading animator, juggles eras and milieus. *Kiki's*

and sci-fi with extraordinary 3-D illusionism (using camera movements once considered impossible without computer plotting), the lucidity of live-action, and a subtle-enough pitch for raised environmental awareness, Miyazaki has set a new standard for the world's largest animation industry. It's said that Spielberg once claimed that the opening sequence in *Cagliostro's Castle* (part of the *Lupin the III* series) was the greatest chase scene ever filmed, animated or otherwise. *Nausicaä*, his epic tale of toxic forests and warring cities in a style that's sort of medieval high-tech, makes you wish Frank Herbert could draw.

The Japanese are as obsessed with robots as we are with pastoral animals. While we get to watch Spielberg's nursery-eye view of fifty-year-old cartoon leads, they're pushing robot lore up a notch toward myth. Peter Chung, a local animator who collects this stuff, says machines are their heroes because Japan's resurgence is so closely linked to technology. It may have as much to do with personal empowerment. "There's the idea that, being physically diminutive, they can

encase themselves in giant mechanical superstructures that are incredibly exaggerated masculine stereotypes." This might also explain sumo wrestling.

In the mostly impressive anthology *Robot Carnival*, soon to be released in the States, nine top Japanese animators address the theme of artificial life. Two of the vignettes amazed me. In Yasuomi Umetsu's *Presence*, a young married inventor creates a mechanical girl who falls in love with him, so on impulse he destroys her. As an old man, he's haunted by her memory. It's *Pinocchio* made tragic and erotic, a poignant counterpoint to the *Transformers* wars one ordinarily connects with Japanese robotry. Takashi Nakamura's *Red Neck and Chicken Man* revolves around a caped drummer-robot chasing a comical jerk on a scooter—the everyhuman—while marauding mechanical hellions from Out There turn Japanese gotham into a techno-inferno. *Modern Times* meets *War of the Worlds* meets *Godzilla*. There are scenes that look like Piranesi's imaginary prisons redecorated by H.R. Giger. This demonization of technology proves the Japanese aren't afraid of dystopian vision, of animation in the service of nightmare. In fact, you could say it's a specialty.

For a pretty good stab at animated noir, Japanese-style, there's Dezaki Osamu's *Golgo 13*. The title character, also called Duke, is a stoic assassin for hire who has Bond's way with women, only he's all sang-froid and no charm. As he goes about eliminating Yakuza and a tycoon's son, for reasons too complicated to go into, he realizes that he himself is being hunted. There's a *Prizzi's Honor*-type assassins-in-love sequence, and several layers of picturesque villainy, from white-collar thug to the Joker-ish Snake Man. *Golgo 13* is claustrophobic, brooding, macabre, self-parodying—full of brittle eroticism, simmering amorality, calculated panic, and mesmerizing ultraviolence. Every scene is frisked for effective images by relentless sleights of camera. Like most Japanese animation, there's enough graphic voltage to light a city, but not quite enough character. Unlike America's best, a Japanese cast usually doesn't act so much as expedite story. Persona, as expressed in idiosyncratic gesture, takes a back seat to stylishness. ■

NEXT ISSUE: Michael Kurcfeld takes a look at European and Asian animation, decodes the new wave of computer animation, and calls our attention to recent animation with a decided politically correct tone.

¹ This article originally appeared in *L.A. Style* magazine and is reprinted with the author's permission.

ANIMAG GAMES COLUMN

Ever wondered how to play that unintelligible Gundam game? Are you craving to read that Super Mario booklet, but you can't decipher the rules? And why do the characters on some of those millions of enticing cartridges look like your favorite animation characters?

By David Riddick and James Teal

We'll be answering these questions, and many more, in our new Video Game column. In fact, we'll be happy to answer any questions that we can about Japanese video games in general or discuss specific problems you're having with individual games. In this first installment, we'll cover the history and explore the different game systems in the rapidly expanding Japanese and American game market.

After the astronomical rise and fall of Atari in the late 70's, the American game market was something of a void until 1986, the year that Nintendo introduced the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) in America. Nintendo, with its challenging games, eye-popping graphics, and expandable system—not to mention that lovable cult figure, Mario—almost single-handedly turned what was thought to be a doomed market into a flourishing high-tech industry.

Based on Nintendo's "Family Computer" or "Famicom" system, which was released almost three years earlier in Japan, the NES has amassed an immense following of various age groups both here and overseas. This incredibly expansive market drew other companies into the industry. Companies such as Sega, SNK, NEC and others have followed Nintendo's lead, releasing their own machines and their own unique cartridges.

The Companies: NINTENDO

Nintendo has remained the leading force in home video games in Japan since the fateful year that it introduced the Famicom system, the basis for the NES, in 1983. Home video games have become almost an obsession in

Japan; one popularly related incident tells of the small boy that set his home on fire when his older brother wouldn't let him play *Dragon Quest 4*. Most fans don't go that far, but many are willing to wait hours in long lines to get their hands on the coveted cartridges.

Many magazines, such as *Famicom Tsushin* and *Family Computer*, support the Japanese gaming industry. These magazines equal the quality of such anime standards as *Animage* and *Newtype* and contain pictorial tips on popular games and previews of upcoming games.

Nintendo's most recent release, its first 16-bit system, is known as "Super Famicom," in Japan and the "Super Nintendo Entertainment System" in the U.S. In a deceptively compact home unit, the system is capable of delivering true arcade—quality graphics, including an almost three-dimensional scrolling background that casts an incredible illusion of depth and texture. The custom-built Sony sound board, complete with rich digital stereo sound, adds to this illusion by acoustically matching virtually any given visual situation. For example, if a game character is walking in a cavern, both the background music and the sound effects sound as if they are occurring in a vast space.

SEGA

Sega is renowned as one of the true pioneers in arcade video games, especially for such classic games as *After Burner* and *Hang On*. Although they entered the home video game in 1987 with their 8-bit Master System, they achieved true prominence with their 16-bit Genesis system, known in Japan as

"Megadrive." The current system of choice among many hardcore American and Japanese fans, the Genesis system is considered by some to be the catalyst that forced Nintendo to create the Super NES/Famicom system.

Sega holds a large segment of the video game market, and has sold over 3.5 million Genesis systems sold worldwide. Like Nintendo's Super systems, the Genesis features incredibly realistic graphics and digital sound. Experts predict that Nintendo will have to be on its guard against Sega's new, immensely entertaining games and its innovative system.

NEC TurboGrafx-16

The American version of the Japanese NEC PC Engine, the TurboGrafx-16 was the first video game system with 16-bit graphics capabilities. The PC Engine has only an 8-bit processor, like the Famicom and the Sega Master systems, but its advanced graphics drew a substantial following. Besides the awesome pictorials, the PC Engine garnered fans for an expandable design that allowed players to add numerous additional features. For example, its MultiTap feature allowed up to five players to play one game simultaneously.

One of the most exciting and most advanced features of the PC Engine and TurboGraphics-16 is the CD Rom unit, released in fall 1988. The CD Rom unit introduced a groundbreaking new element into home video games: compact disks. Since compact disks store a phenomenal amount of information in a very small space, the CD Rom system enables the PC Engine to run very large, intricate adventure games with graphic

sequences almost as fluid as standard video animation. An added bonus is the advanced sound—the background music to some PC Engine games has become so popular that it can be bought in music stores across Japan. In addition, many CD Rom games have passages where players can hear the characters talking, not in digitized sound bites, but in compact-disk-quality recorded voices.

Sales of the CD Rom unit surged in Japan with the release of the game *Ziria Far East of Eden* in June 1989. However, sales of the CD system haven't been quite so impressive in the states, probably due to the unit's \$399 price tag—more than twice as much as the base system.

NEC continues to explore expandability options with the TurboGrafx-16. Currently, this is the only home system to have a portable version capable of playing the same games. The GT Express, called the Turbo Express in the States, is a hand-held unit with a backlit LCD screen that can play the same game cards as the home video unit. However, as one might expect, it costs substantially more than most of the hand-held video game systems out on the market today.

SNK

SNK Home Entertainment, Inc. has developed the Neo Geo system, which at 32 bits is without question the most advanced home system available on the market today. Featuring dynamic graphics and 15—channel stereo sound, the Neo Geo system also offers a game-saving memory card that allows you to save your games and play them on the Neo Geo system at your local arcade. Currently, there are about 20 game cartridges available for this system, all with awe-inspiring graphics and hair-raising action.

But there is one drawback to this ultimate system: it is ridiculously expensive. The machine itself costs about \$650, and a cartridge will run you about \$100 apiece. Luckily for those without the extra cash, you can still enjoy these games at your local arcade.

The New Generation of Games

The goal of all home video game companies this time around is simple: Keep quality high. Atari's demise is widely attributed to the fact that hundreds of low-quality games flooded the market, confusing the consumers and discouraging them from purchasing even high-quality games. Nintendo, determined not to follow in Atari's dust-filled footsteps, even insists on authorizing each game to make sure that it bears up to their exacting standards before allowing it to be released to the public.

As any game designer will tell you, coming up with a new, innovative game concept is one of the toughest parts of creating a game. Not surprisingly, many of the games designed in Japan take their inspiration from a related industry: anime. Many American video game players unsuspectingly enjoy games based on popular anime series as *Gundam*, *Nadia*, *Macross*, *Ranma 1/2* and many others.

Over 35 games to date have been based on popular animation shows, most of them for the Nintendo systems. Only a few of these games have been released in English in the States, but since most games are originally produced in Japan and then translated in English there is always the possibility of more being released. Currently, fans can play *Golgo 13* and *Fist of the North Star* in English on their NES, and *Area 88* and *Ultraman* on their Super NES. If you're willing to brave instructions entirely in Japanese, then games such as *Macross*, *Zeta Gundam*, *Ranma 1/2*, *Akira* and others are available for the NES. For the Super NES, the determined can try such games as *Gundam F-91* and *SD Great Battle*.

Sega offers a range of anime-based games, but under names that don't infringe on Nintendo's exclusive rights to the names—but not the concepts—of the animated shows. For example, *Last Battle* is actually *Fist of the*

North Star, and *Mystic Defender* is based on *Kujaku*.

The ever-increasing popularity of anime shows in both America and Japan makes it likely that more games based on anime shows will be made available. However, owners of older systems should beware, as most new games are produced for the newer game systems. However, if you like playing games in Japanese, you're in luck—cartridges routinely become cheaper when a new system that doesn't play them comes along. And since Nintendo and Sega's new systems are released in Japan first, Japanese cartridges for older systems are bound to drop in price much sooner than the American games.

Fans of Japanese games will have noticed that the cartridge slots for the American and the Japanese Nintendo systems are different sizes, but Japanese games can be played on American systems with the help of an adapter. Adapters are available from most places that sell Japanese home video games, but they are unlikely to be sold at large video stores that sell games in English.

In forthcoming issues, we hope to let you in on new game releases, give game reviews, and relate some of the trickier strategies for games for the Nintendo, NEC TurboGrafx-16, and Sega Genesis systems. ■

The Sega Genesis and some of its cartridges

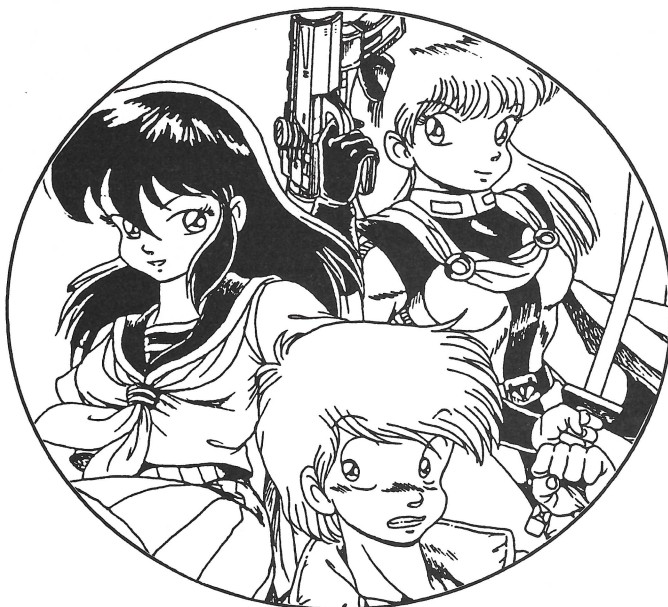


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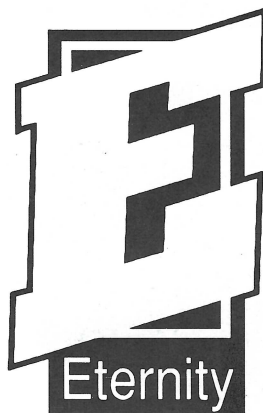


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ANIMATED PLASTIC

The Injection-Mold Kit

By TONY DEL GROSSO

In previous issues we've discussed such weighty topics as the construction and painting of both resin and vinyl model kits. One type of kit remains unexplored...the injection-mold kit.

Readers familiar with the complicated process of cutting, grinding and heating associated with resin and vinyl kits may not immediately know what an injection-mold kit is. Fans of the easy snap-and-assemble *Gundam*, *Super-Deformed Gundam* and *Patlabor* kits currently on the market, however, know exactly what we're talking about. More traditional model builders may recognize the injection-mold kit as the standard process for creating the archetypal model airplane kit.

Injection-molding is used primarily to mass-produce thousands of sheets of parts. Unlike resin and soft-vinyl kits, which come in separate pieces (arms, legs and body), the parts of an injection-mold kit come on a sheet attached to a thin plastic structure called a

tree. Parts are halved and the modeler must glue or snap them together.

The molds used to produce injection-mold kits are staggeringly complicated and expensive to produce. The moldmaker must not only create all of the parts, but plot the most practical arrangement of the pieces on the tree. The process of creating the mold is so intricate that companies such as Bandai invest millions of yen in steel molds which will not wear out and break with repeated use.

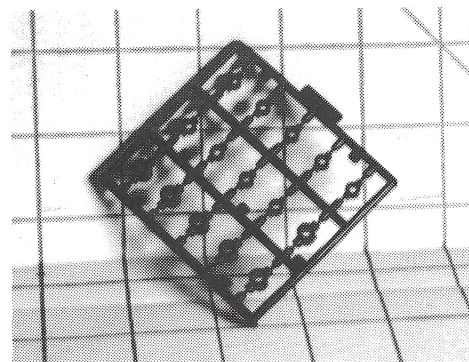
Because the expense of steel molds is so high, companies use the method only for kits sure to remain popular, such as the designs for the original *Gundam*. Only the biggest and most successful companies in Japan can afford this process. Science fiction kit king Bandai dominates the market on animation kits, while other companies, such as Tamiya and Takara, stay in the mainstream by producing injection-mold kits of ever-popular battleships, airplanes and race cars.

History

The injection-mold method is one of the earliest molding processes has been around for about thirty years.

Two of the earliest science fiction/fantasy kits, released in the 1960s, were *Tetsuwan Atom* (*Astro Boy*) and *Tetsujin 28* (*Gigantor*). These kits, unlike the snap-together models known today, had to be assembled with a liquid glue that actually melted the plastic together. In fact, these kits can hardly be classified with

today's models because they were seen in the industry as toys. When assembled, they were remote-controlled dolls.



The innovation: poly-caps

These early kits lacked any serious detail and sported highly exaggerated body parts. This trend towards exaggeration, which partly hid the clumsy, experimental design of the kits, continued for many years [see the books *on tin toys of the era*—Ed.].

The early '70s saw the emergence of the model kit as separate from the toy industry. Bandai, with their line of giant robots, began to streamline the appearance of their kits, but the distorted look continued to be popular and the kits still required glue for assembly.

Around 1975 the model kit came into its own. Bandai, now firmly established as the innovator in the field, began to add more

An assortment of Bandai kits



detail to their kits. In addition to stationary kits, they began to experiment with movement, giving some kits wind-up motors. Examples of this motorized phase include the *Yamato* from *Space Cruiser Yamato* and the God Bird from *Brave Raideen*.

Not surprisingly, the on-air premiere of *Space Cruiser Yamato* launched a whole new craze for detail among the model-building community. The kits for *Yamato* were exceptional in their detailing and realistic appearance and set the standard for future models.

In 1979, with the release of Sunrise's *Mobile Suit Gundam*, Bandai faced a whole new problem: poseability. Their response was to create models whose heads, elbows and knees could be moved to a certain extent. The only problem was that moving these parts would eventually wear the joints out.

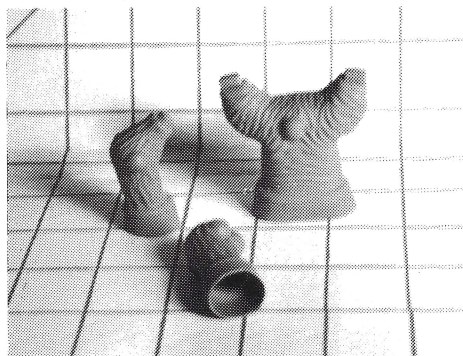
But soon Bandai introduced "poly-caps," small bits of plastic that turned every joint into a moveable arm-and-socket arrangement. Poly-caps were first used in the model kit line for the *Battle Mecha Xabungle* series and proved a notable success. However, although the problem of the joints was solved, builders still needed glue to put the kits together.

In 1987, Bandai began to focus on another problem—painting. Starting with Sunrise's new series *Metal Armor Dragonar*, they included colored stickers that could be used on certain spots in lieu of paint.

Bandai made a bold attempt to elimi-

ing; in 1988, they released a line of kits under the title "Gundam Sentinel" which were cast in a new process called "System Injection Iropura" (colored plastic). Unlike System Injection 21, different colors weren't layered on top of each other. Instead, different trees were cast in different colors

Then came another innovation. With the release of *Char's Counterattack*, Bandai renounced glue entirely and shifted to snap-



The outer rubber layer for the Patlabor series

together construction for its science fiction lines. Now kits could be put together with a minimum of time and effort—the builder could simply cut them out and press them together.

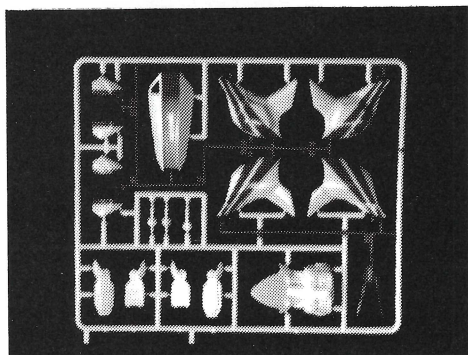
The parts were in colored plastic, and with the addition of stickers for spot-detailing, no one had to paint. Now, no one had to be an expert to build a kit.

But even more innovations were on the way. In 1989, Bandai released a new line of models based on the shogun-style robot kits *Sengoku Den* (War Chronicles). These kits were essentially mobile suits dressed in 16th-century samurai clothing.

Instead of concentrating on the outside of the kits, Bandai reworked the interior by creating a "skeleton" to which all of the exterior parts attached. These kits had better support and fell apart much less easily than the earlier kits. All kits released since, such as *Mobile Police Patlabor*, have had this interior skeleton system.

Compared to the kits of the 1960s, model kits have come a long way. With injection-modeling, even the most impatient beginner can build a kit. Enthusiasts of the simple and instantly rewarding school of snap-together kits should eagerly await new developments in the field.

In our next issue, we'll begin to talk about something a lot more complicated, something that only the brave of heart should attempt at home (or in their garage)...making your own garage-kit mold. ■



System Injection 21

nate painting completely with the introduction of "System Injection 21," a process that allowed different colors of plastic to be injected into the same mold. Combined with the colored stickers, the new system virtually eliminated painting. The first kit to utilize this process was the *Metal Armor XD-01 Dragonar-1* kit. Unfortunately, System Injection 21 ultimately proved too expensive to be practical and was discontinued.

But Bandai never stopped experiment-

ANIMATED PLASTIC RELEASES

Volks

Go Nagai's popular characters Devil Man and Siren together in a resin kit entitled "Darkness."

Kaiyodo

From the comic *3x3 Eyes* a resin cast super-deformed figure of Pai.

Max Factory

From the U.S. live action movie *The Guyver*. Steve Wang sculpted this soft vinyl kit.

Musashiya

From the early days of the Tatusnoko super hero series *Cashean* comes Luna and Swanie. Kit is resin and is 1/12 scale.

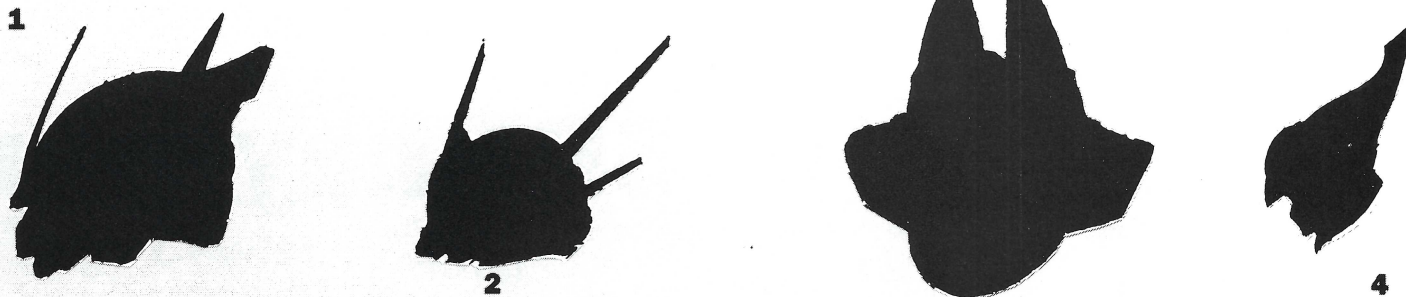
Architect

For the American animation fan we have *The Wacky Racers*. A resin Dick Dasterdly and Mutly with vehicle have been released.

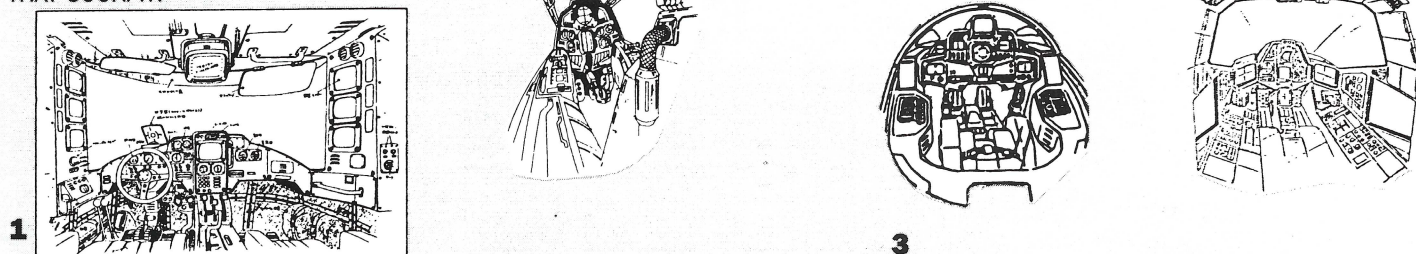


The ANIMAG Fun Page

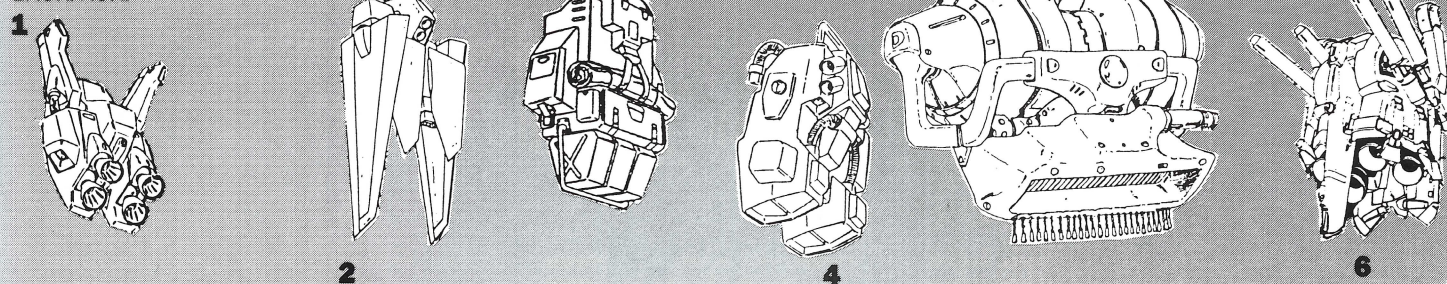
Hey, Anime Fans! Test your knowledge! Test your skill! Gloat to your friends if you can! Sob in disappointment if you can't! See if you can NAME THAT MECHA HEAD!



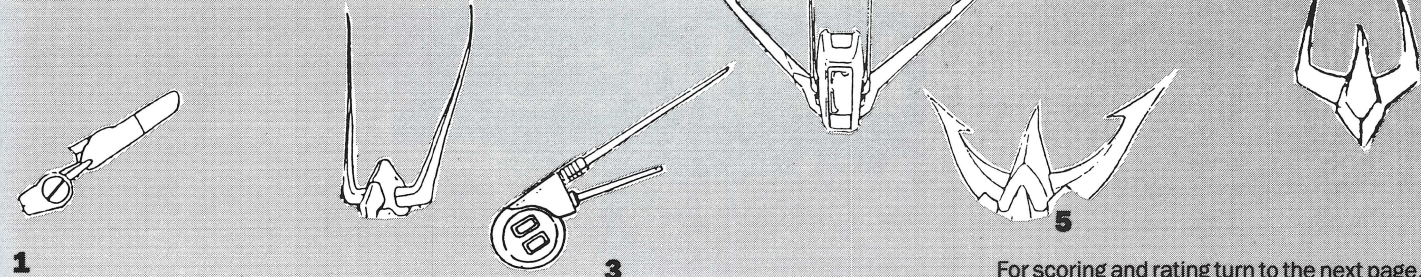
Now that you have passed the first level, can you overcome the next challenge? NAME THAT COCKPIT!



One more time with feeling! NAME THAT BACKPACK!



And for the ultimate challenge...NAME THAT ANTENNA!



For scoring and rating turn to the next page.

ANSWERS

Part 1

- 1 Zakaal
- 2 Falguen
- 3 Galient
- 4 Billbine

Part 2

- 1 Xabungle
- 2 Gundam
- 3 Layzner
- 4 Dragonar

Part 3

- 1 Gundam Mk II
- 2 Bullgrenn
- 3 Scopedog
- 4 Dougram
- 5 Led Mirage
- 6 EX-S

Part 4

- 1 Ingram
- 2 G-Roon
- 3 Layzner
- 4 S-Gundam
- 5 Raideen
- 6 Char Aznable

YOUR SCORE

For every correct answer give yourself one point. Total up your points and see which of these four categories you fall into.

20-18 You are a certified mecha freak. You may even be a newtype.

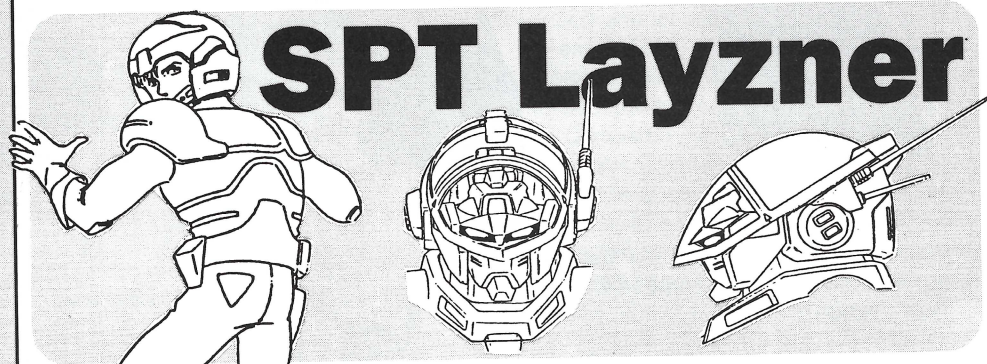
17-12 You show promise. Receive a hearty pat on the back from your favorite mobile suit.

11-6 You need improvement. At this point, you would likely end up as a GM pilot in the next war.

5-0 Cringe in shame! Better luck on the Rumiko Takahashi quiz.



NEXT ISSUE



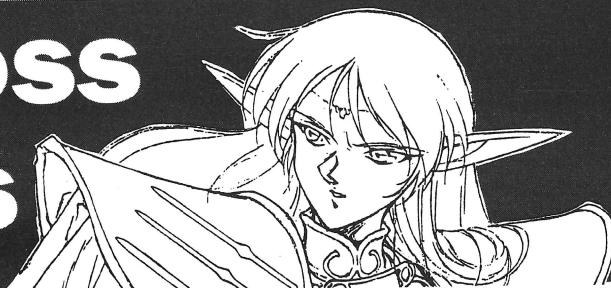
Crusher Joe



Shurato



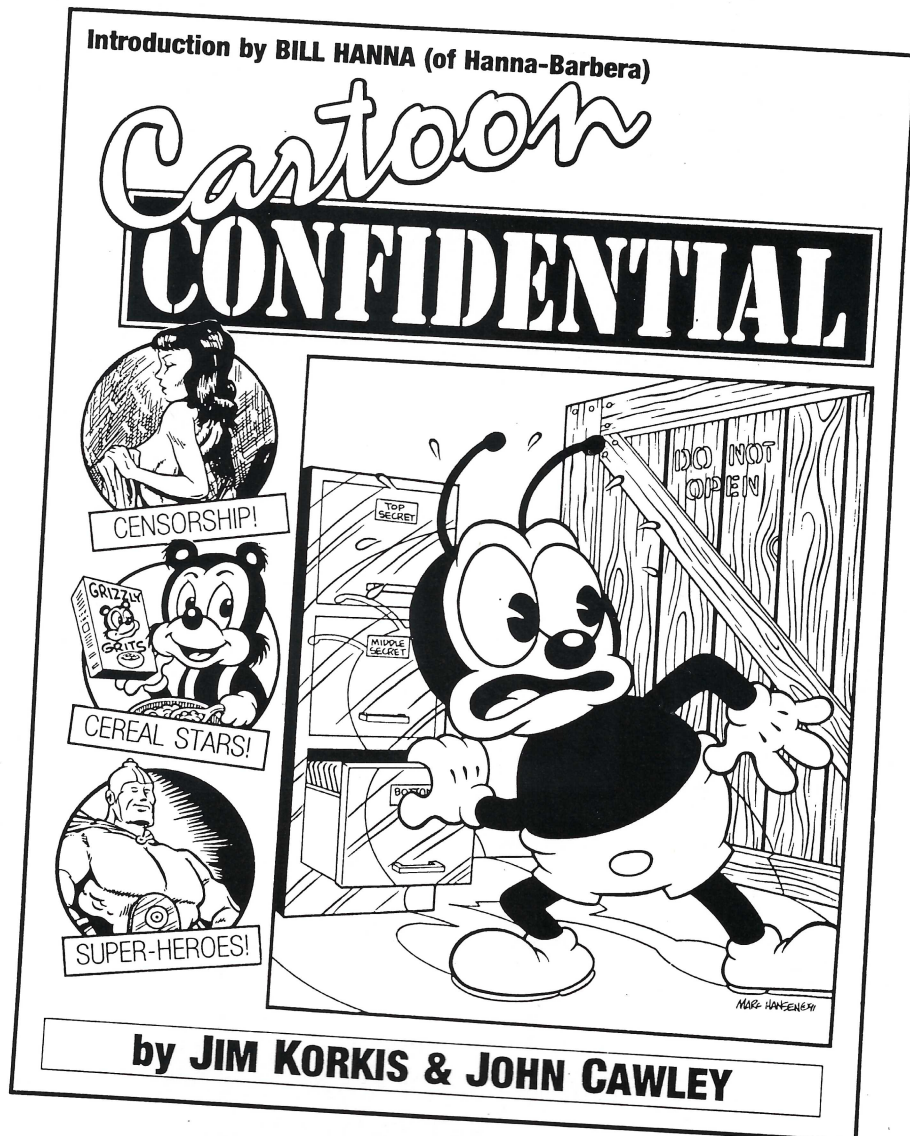
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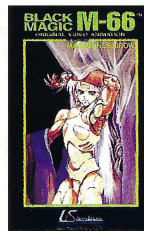
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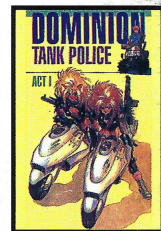
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ends the epic saga
of Noriko &
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wants to terminate
a young girl in this
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DOMINION Part1

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